14 killed in Zamboanga del Norte

Top 10 doctor-examinees, Page A19

By Lullie A. Micabalo
PDI Mindanao Bureau
and Martin Marfil *in Manila*

KALAWIT, Zamboanga del Norte—They told the village folk to form a line with the children, and then the armed men shot them down.

A massacre in Tubod village in this town on Wednesday night left at least 14 people dead, at least 10 more wounded and at least five houses burned to the ground. Six children were among those killed, including an infant and a 7-year-old boy *(Story below)*.

The police force in Western Mindanao was placed on full alert yesterday.

Military and police officials were quick to point to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front as the culprit.

"There are indications that it was carried out by the MILF as it is one of their areas of operations," said Col. Mayoralgo dela Cruz, spokesperson for the Philippine Army.

But the MILF's Eid Kabalu said the accusing finger was only to be expected.

14 KILLED/ A20

Death came knocking at 8:45

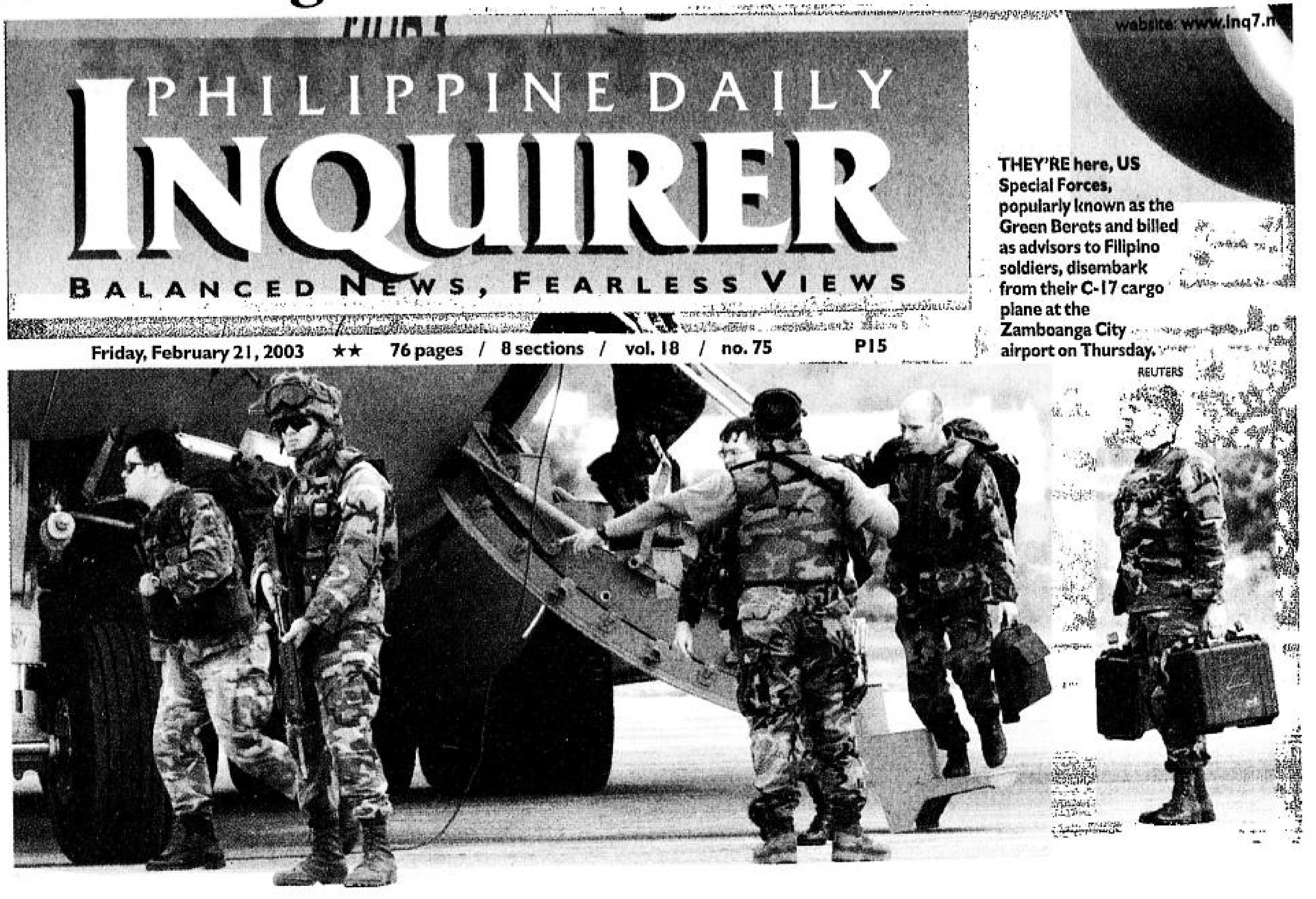
By Lullie A. Micabalo
PDI Mindanao Bureau

KALAWIT, Zamboanga del Norte—Joselita Congrezo, 38, was roused from her sleep by a persistent knocking on the door.

Clutching her 6-week-old son Benz, Joselita or Bebing stood up to see who it

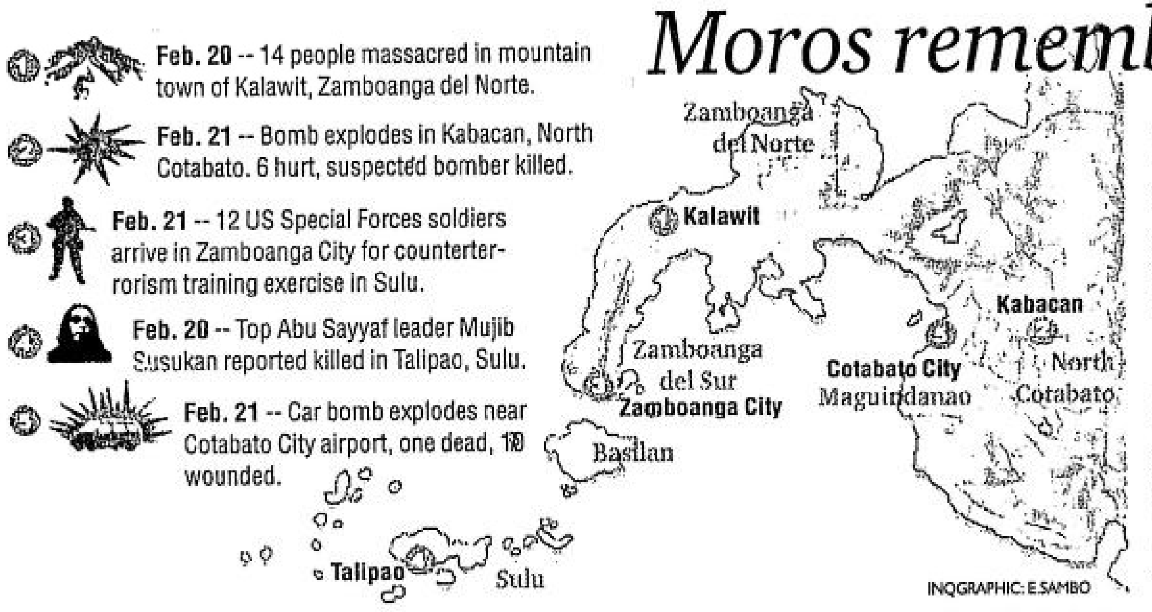
DEATH/ A20

website: www.inq7.n
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Friday, February 21, 2003 ★★ 76 pages / 8 sections / vol. 18 / no. 75 P15



THEY'RE here, US Special Forces, popularly known as the Green Berets and billed as advisors to Filipino soldiers, disembark from their C-17 cargo plane at the Zamboanga City airport on Thursday. REUTERS

Hello, Joe! Beware, Joe!



Feb. 20 -- 14 people massacred in mountain town of Kalawit, Zamboanga del Norte.

Feb. 21 -- Bomb explodes in Kabacan, North Cotabato. 6 hurt, suspected bomber killed.

Feb. 21 -- 12 US Special Forces soldiers arrive in Zamboanga City for counterterrorism training exercise in Sulu.

Feb. 20 -- Top Abu Sayyaf leader Mujib Susukan reported killed in Talipao, Sulu.

Feb. 21 -- Car bomb explodes near Cotabato City airport, one dead, 10 wounded.

INQGRAPHIC: E.SAMBO

Moros remember US killing field in Bud Dahu

By Noralyn Mustafa, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

"ALHAMDULILLAH (praise Allah) if they will come. It will give us the opportunity to avenge the atrocities they committed against our forefathers," said a resident on the arrival of US troops in Jolo.

Hello again, Joe!

The first time US forces landed on the shores of Sulu, they came with their Krags and handlebar moustaches as well as the Yankee-doodle spirit left over from the victory in Manila Bay. And also a bit of *deja vu*, recalling the Alamo no less in their takeover of Fort Pilar in Zamboanga just a few days earlier.

The Tausug, glad to be rid of the Spaniards, welcomed them with krises sheathed, blissfully unaware that they had just been colonized even when the *tau puti* (white man) shoved the Bates Treaty under the Sultan's nose.

Seven years later, in 1907, the US forces led by Gen. Leonard Wood killed over a thousand Tausug men, women and children on Bud Dahu in Patikul, and a few hundred more in battles on Jolo's other mountains during their stay.

When they pulled out after some three decades, they left the "Moros" other things to remember them by: a civil government, schoolhouses and a public school system, paved roads, electricity, horse-racing and the romantic

HELLO/ A21

12 US Green Berets here; 60 more expected

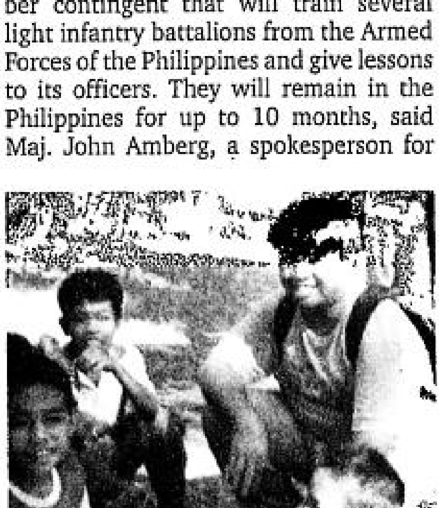
ZAMBOANGA CITY—An advance team of 12 US Green Berets arrived here yesterday for a new counterterrorism training exercise with Filipino troops next week.

They are the first batch of a 70-member contingent that will train several light infantry battalions from the Armed Forces of the Philippines and give lessons to its officers. They will remain in the Philippines for up to 10 months, said Maj. John Amberg, a spokesperson for the US troops in the South.

The Green Berets arrived from Okinawa on a US Air Force C-17 military cargo plane and boarded vans for a ride to Camp Gen. Arturo Enrile in Malagutay, in a convoy trailed by an armored personnel carrier.

They will join 12 other advisers already in this city preparing for the start of exercises next week, Filipino military officials said. About 60 more US Special

12 US/ A21



ERNEST GUEVARRA, 25, in Pikit will receive his award from Reebok on April 10 in Boston, Mass. PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

Young doctor wins $50,000 int'l rights award

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
PDI Mindanao Bureau

PIKIT, Cotabato—I thank God for giving us a son who is a man for others, who devotes his life to others amidst chaos.

That's a mother talking through a text message to her 25-year-old son, Dr.

YOUNG/ A5

2 bombs hit C. Mindanao towns; 2 dead

By the PDI Mindanao Bureau
and Martin Marfil *in Manila*

POWERFUL explosions some five hours apart rocked two Central Mindanao towns yesterday, killing two persons and wounding at least 19 others.

The dead included 17-year-old Imaran Makalogi, whom officials identified as the bomber who prematurely detonated a bomb inside a public market in Kabacan, North Cotabato, yesterday morning. Nine people were injured in that attack.

At about 2:30 p.m., a powerful car bomb went off near the Cotabato Airport in Barangay Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat,

BOMBS/ A20

'Kabayan': What conflict of interest?

By Jerome Aning

FOR "KABAYAN" Noli de Castro, there is no conflict of interest when he serves as a senator and as a broad-

KABAYAN/ A5

HINDE UN-ETHICAL ITO, BAYAN!

"I EXPRESS great displeasure," President Macapagal tells the PNP referring to its performance that falls below public expectations during a command conference at the Palace on Thursday. EDWIN BACASMAS

GMA scolds cops over street crimes

By Dona Pazzibugan and TJ Burgonio

AT AN unprecedented command conference in Malacañang, President Macapagal-Arroyo gave police officials a dressing down for not doing their job to protect the public from thieves, muggers and other bad guys prowling the streets.

"I must express great displeasure for (your) failure to deliver a performance that the public expects of our police officers," Ms Macapagal told officials of the Philippine National Police (PNP), including station commanders from Metro Manila, Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog.

She noted "widespread perceptions that crime is on the rise, that the police are ineffective, that the government is unable to protect people's lives and property from thieves, robbers, rapists and

GMA/ A20

US may junk plan for Turkish front

WASHINGTON/ANKARA—As Washington pressed for UN support for its war against Baghdad, Turkey threw the northern thrust of a planned US invasion into doubt on Wednesday when it put off a decision allowing American troops into its soil.

The United States has refused to increase the size of an economic aid package for Turkey to secure access to its bases, and it is prepared to deploy American troops elsewhere in the region if a deal is not reached by the end of the week.

US officials said the US offer of $6 billion in grants and up to $20 billion in loan guarantees was final. "That's all you're going to get," a US official quoted US Secretary of State Colin Powell as telling Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gul.

Turkey has demanded more

US MAY/ A19

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon and the whole of Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/21/03

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FrontPage

FATF reps to meet lawmakers

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

TWO representatives of the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) are expected to arrive in the country tonight, according to presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye.

Malacañang had arranged for the officials to meet with senators opposed to the amendments demanded by the FATF in the local Anti-Money Laundering Act (Amla). Bunye said the meeting would probably take place on Monday.

President Macapagal-Arroyo would not join the meeting, he said.

On Wednesday, Ms Macapagal said the Palace was facilitating the meeting so the senators could hear directly from the FATF how non-compliance with its requirements would affect the country.

"What we're trying to do is put the FATF and the senators, the doubting Thomases, together so they could exchange ideas and come up with a solution that will be good for the Filipino people," the President had said.

The FATF has given Congress a new deadline of Mar. 15 to come up with suitable amendments to the Amla before the country is slapped with international banking sanctions.

But Senate President Franklin Drilon and Manila Rep. Jaime Lopez, chair of the House banking committee, said yesterday five to six FATF delegates from Asia and Europe would be arriving next week to apprise Filipino lawmakers of the necessary amendments to the Amla.

"We can find out exactly what the FATF wants and in turn we could tell them how far (the country) can go with the requirements," Lopez told the INQUIRER.

"We'll have a face-to-face meeting with the delegates. Hopefully once a consensus is arrived at, we can reconstitute the bicameral committee and see how we can have a measure that will address all concerns," Drilon said.

The Philippines is on the FATF list of Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories (NCCT) that failed to conform to international anti-money laundering standards. Also on the list are the Cook Islands, Egypt, Guatemala, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nigeria, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Ukraine.

As far as Lopez is concerned, the Philippines cannot give in to the FATF requirement that the Amla be made retroactive, saying that this was not allowed by the Constitution.

The recent statement of Catholic bishops that lawmakers were blocking the Amla amendments because they feared the discovery of their own ill-gotten wealth also did not sit well with Lopez.

He said the country had the legal means through the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act to go after people with suspected ill-gotten wealth.

On reports that a US-funded program had been dictating Philippine policy and laws, Lopez said lawmakers would not allow the Accelerating Growth, Investment and Liberating with Equity (Agile) group to dictate on them.

He said his committee did consult with Agile on technical aspects but it was his panel and the justice and economic affairs committees that did all the work in putting together the House report on the Amla amendments. *With Christine O. Avendaño, Cynthia D. Balana and Gerald G. Lacuarta*

Comelec cited for contempt

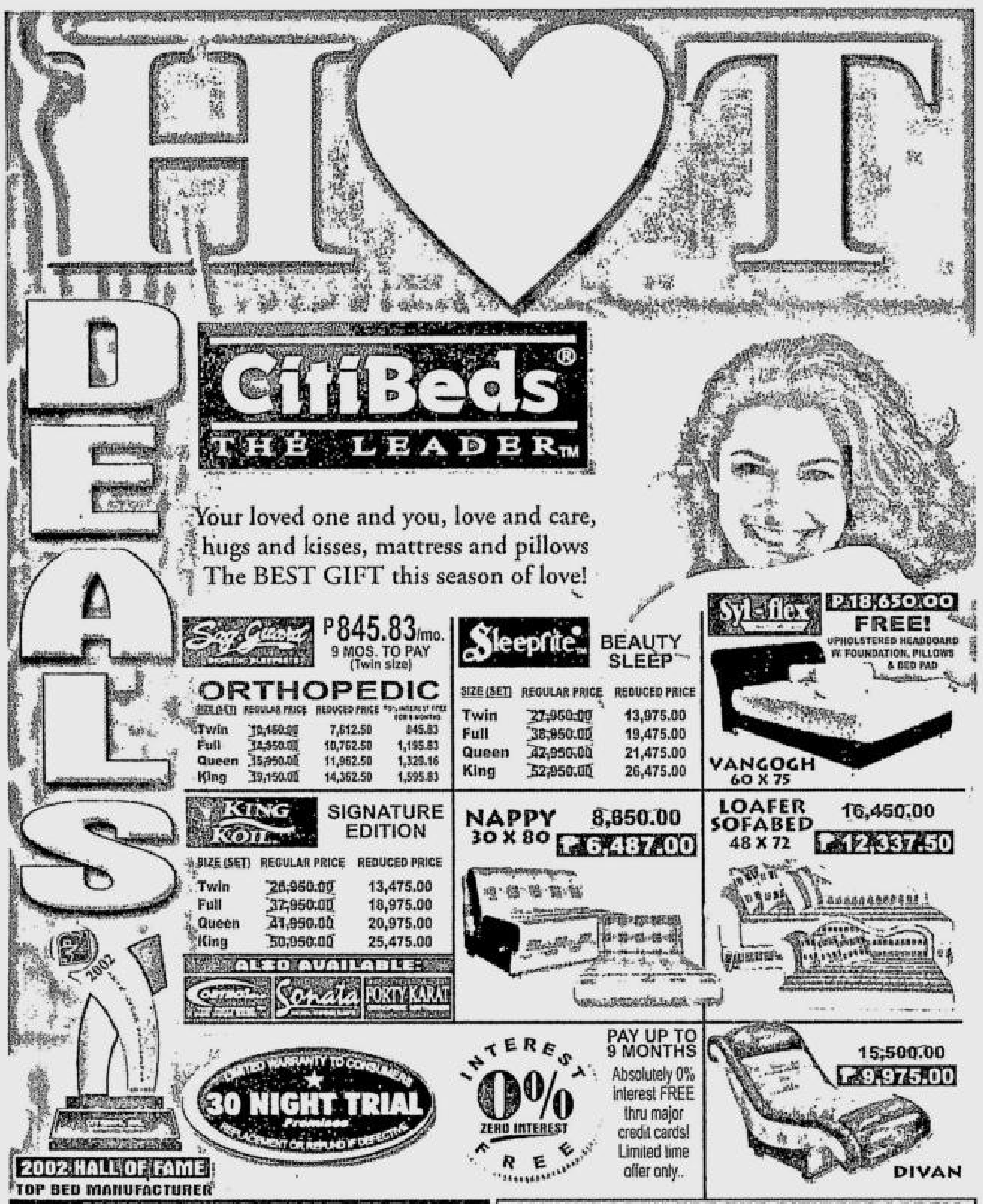
IN A LANDMARK decision, the Supreme Court yesterday found the Commission on Elections guilty of contempt for proclaiming five additional party-list nominees as winners in the May 2001 sectoral elections.

It was the first time all seven commissioners of the Comelec, a constitutional body, had been cited together for contempt.

In a strongly worded resolution, the full court castigated the Comelec for its "intransigence and disobedience" in not only decreeing without authority the proclamation of additional nominees, "worse, it actually proclaimed them."

There was "absolutely no excuse, much less justification, for these brazen, illegal and contemptuous acts," the court said.

The court then fined Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. and Commissioners Luzviminda Tancangco, Rufino Javier, Ralph Lantion and Mehol Sadain P20,000 each. *Michael Lim Ubac*



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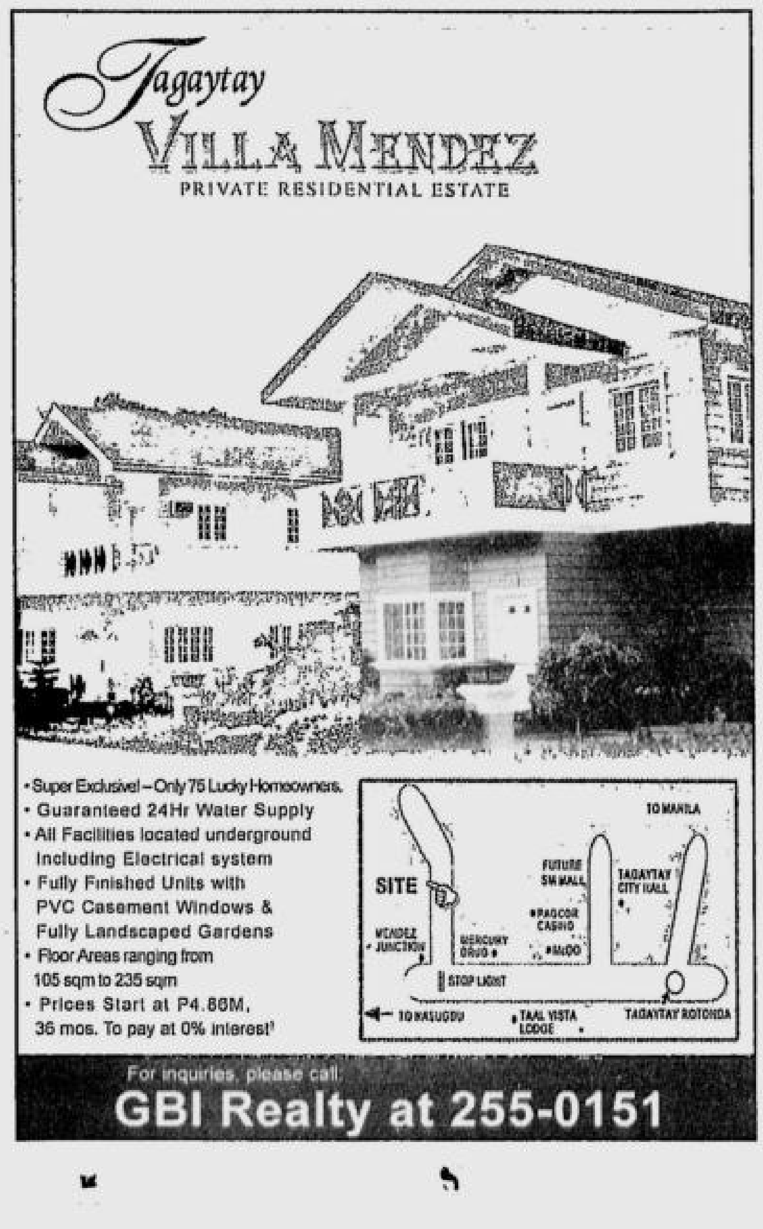

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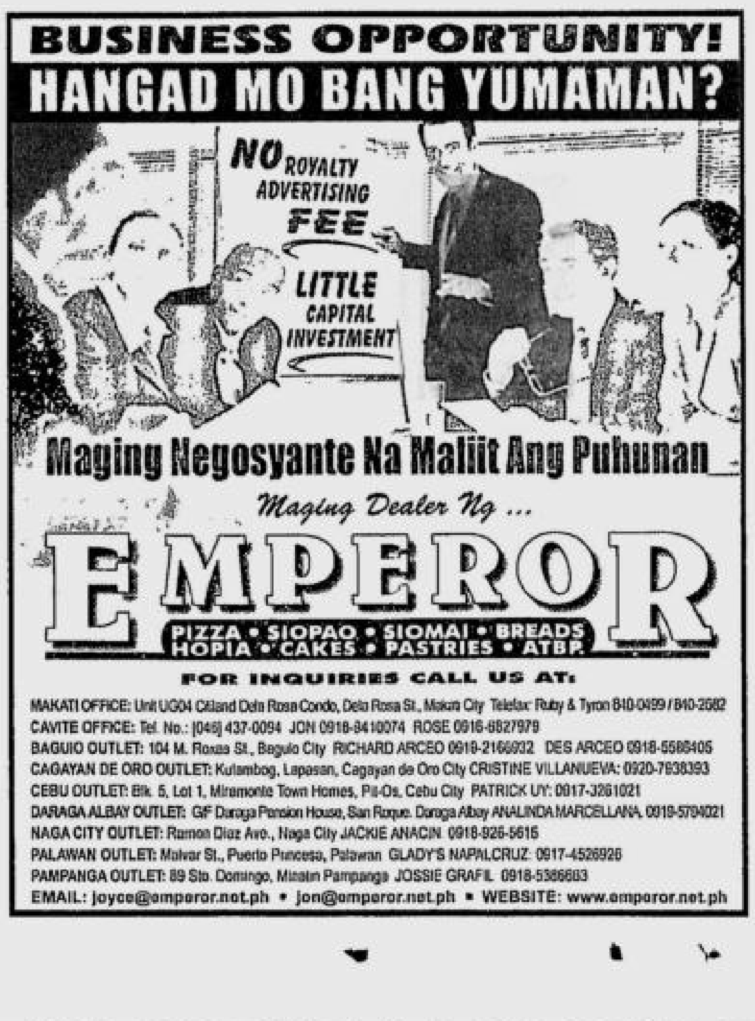

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IMPASSE IN UTRECHT

Back-channel talks fail

By Carlito Pablo

EXPLORATORY talks initiated by the government to jump start the stalled peace negotiations with communist rebels have collapsed.

Back-channel discussions between the government and the communist-led National Democratic Front in Utrecht, The Netherlands "ended abruptly" yesterday when the NDF demanded the removal of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) and NDF chief political consultant Jose Ma. Sison from the list of terrorists of the United States and European Union.

The government rejected the demand because the issue "has important implications on the national interest," said Secretary Silvestre Afable, head of the Presidential Management Staff, who was designated to lead the exploratory team.

"We can't move forward at the moment," Afable said in a statement. "The NDF wants the CPP/NPA and Mr. Sison out of the list and the government is not inclined to change its position."

The designation of the CPP and NPA as terrorist organizations allow the United States and the European Union to freeze their assets and prevent their members from moving across international borders.

Not yet the end

Although the panels reached an impasse, "this is not the end of the road," Afable said. He added that the "road to peace will continue in other paths" but did not say how.

The government called an "indefinite recess" of the talks in June 2001 to protest the killing of Cagayan Rep. Rodolfo Aguinaldo.

Afable was in The Netherlands together with Silvestre Bello III, chair of the government peace panel, and Ma. Carla Munsayac-Villarata, panel executive director. They met with NDF panel chair Luis Jalandoni, panel member Fidel Agcaoili, and their staff.

"We gave them a seven-point proposal to restart the formal talks but the NDF did not want to proceed, claiming that it was under duress because of the terrorist list," Afable said without giving details.

The government team gave the NDF draft of a proposed final peace agreement approved by President Macapagal-Arroyo aimed at ending the 32-year communist insurgency.

The team was to propose a "fast-tracked negotiation leading to one comprehensive agreement, backed by a unilateral suspension of offensive military operations by both sides for the duration of the formal talks."

Afable said he would immediately inform President Macapagal-Arroyo, the Cabinet oversight committee on internal security, and the Norwegian government, which has agreed to host formal negotiations, of the results of the exploratory talks.

In Malacañang, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the President had been informed of the setback.

"We're not discouraged by this development," Bunye said. "We will always be open to negotiations if things become more conducive."

Bunye noted that the "situation has not improved" because the NPA continued to mount tactical offensives. "We expect this to continue," he said.

In a briefing, Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., Philippine National Police chief (PNP), said the PNP was prepared for "worst scenarios" that may occur because of the collapse of the talks.

"If they (rebels) want to continue fighting, we can give it to them," Ebdane said.

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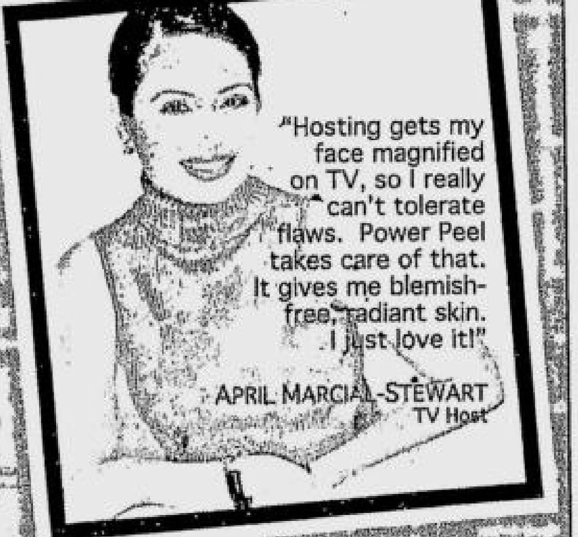
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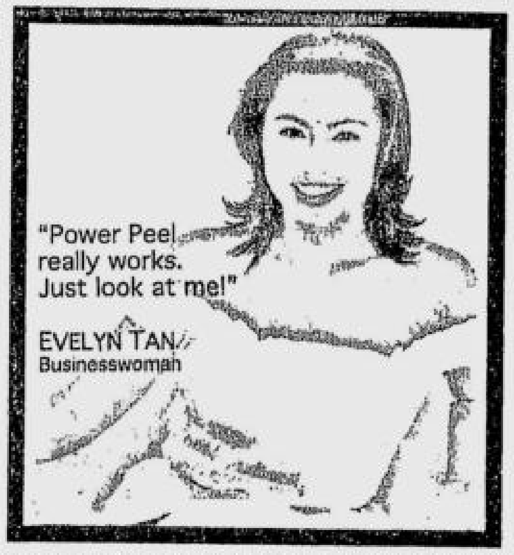
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P5 MILLION BOUNTY

Top Abu chief slain, says AFP

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A top Abu Sayyaf commander with a P5-million bounty on his head reportedly died on Wednesday from wounds suffered during a fire-fight with government forces the day before, a military commander said.

Mujib Susukan was reportedly hit in the head and lapsed into a coma before dying. The Associated Press, however, quoting 104th Infantry Brigade commander Col. Alexander Aleo, said he had been shot under the right armpit and in the right leg, in the clash outside Talipao town on Jolo island Tuesday. Susukan was the leader of one of several Abu Sayyaf factions.

Aleo said soldiers saw Susukan get hit but other rebels and villagers carried him away into the jungle.

Intelligence sources and villagers reported he died Wednesday and was buried in a shallow grave in the village of Bandang in Talipao. Aleo ordered a search for the body.

At Camp Aguinaldo, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, asked to comment on the report, said it was still being verified.

"The report we had is that nine Abu Sayyaf had been killed in that encounter... in Talipao and that one of those critically wounded was Mujib Susukan," Reyes said.

Aleo, however, said four Abu Sayyaf gunmen and one soldier were killed in Tuesday's fighting between government troops and about 50 guerrillas.

On Wednesday, seven guerrillas and three soldiers were killed and seven soldiers wounded in fierce fighting between government troops and 70 rebels outside Patikul town near Talipao, raising the death toll in two days of fighting to 15.

The military shelled suspected Abu Sayyaf positions outside Patikul to flush the Abu Sayyaf out, but the rebels splintered into small groups and engaged the soldiers in running battles.

The Abu Sayyaf has been linked to the al-Qaida international terror network and is on the US list of terrorist organizations.

Susukan was one of the leaders of an Abu Sayyaf band, together with Commander Robot, that seized 21 people, including Western tourists, from the Malaysian resort of Sipadan in April 2000. The group brought their hostages to Jolo and eventually released all but one Filipino in exchange for millions of dollars reportedly paid by Libya.

The Abu Sayyaf on Jolo continues to hold three Indonesian seamen and four women members of the Jehovah's Witnesses Christian sect who were seized last year.

Aleo said sources close to the bandit group confirmed Susukan's death.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya said the military has launched a search for Susukan's grave in Bandang.

Like Aleo, Abaya said he was optimistic the reports of Susukan's death were true because the military's sources were credible.

"Some of them [sources] are his relatives and one is the wife of a ranking Abu Sayyaf leader," Abaya said.

Last year, the military claimed it had killed the self-styled spokesperson of the Abu Sayyaf, Abu Sabaya, in an encounter in the seas of Zamboanga del Norte.

Sabaya's body was never found but the military remains convinced he is dead.

As for Susukan's demise, Abaya said he had "a small percentage of doubt."

"That's why I sent a search team to locate the burial ground, but I would like to believe so," he said. *Martin P. Marfil, Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau, and AP*

De Leon appointed Navy chief

THE NAVY officer who led the unit which killed Abu Sayyaf spokesperson Abu Sabaya last year is the new Navy chief.

Rear Admiral Ernesto de Leon was named to the post yesterday by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

He will replace Vice Admiral Victorino Hingco who will retire on March 6.

Aside from the plaudits his unit got for the Sabaya kill, he was also the Filipino signatory in the controversial Mutual Logistics Support Agreement.

US Col. Mathias Velasco signed for the US side.

Officials said that De Leon, a member of the Philippine Military Academy class of 1972, was considered a "dark horse" as he was number 3 in the list of candidates if seniority was the primary factor.

Before being named to the top Navy post, De Leon was head of the Naval Forces South.

Naval Forces South was the unit which was tasked to intercept Abu Sabaya and it got its chance when its elements intercepted Sabaya off the coast of Sibuco Point, Zamboanga del Norte on June 21, 2002.

After that, he was given the post of J-5, the AFP deputy chief for plans and programs.

It was during his term as J-5 that he signed the MLSA.

De Leon will retire on 2006 when he reaches the mandatory retirement age of 56.

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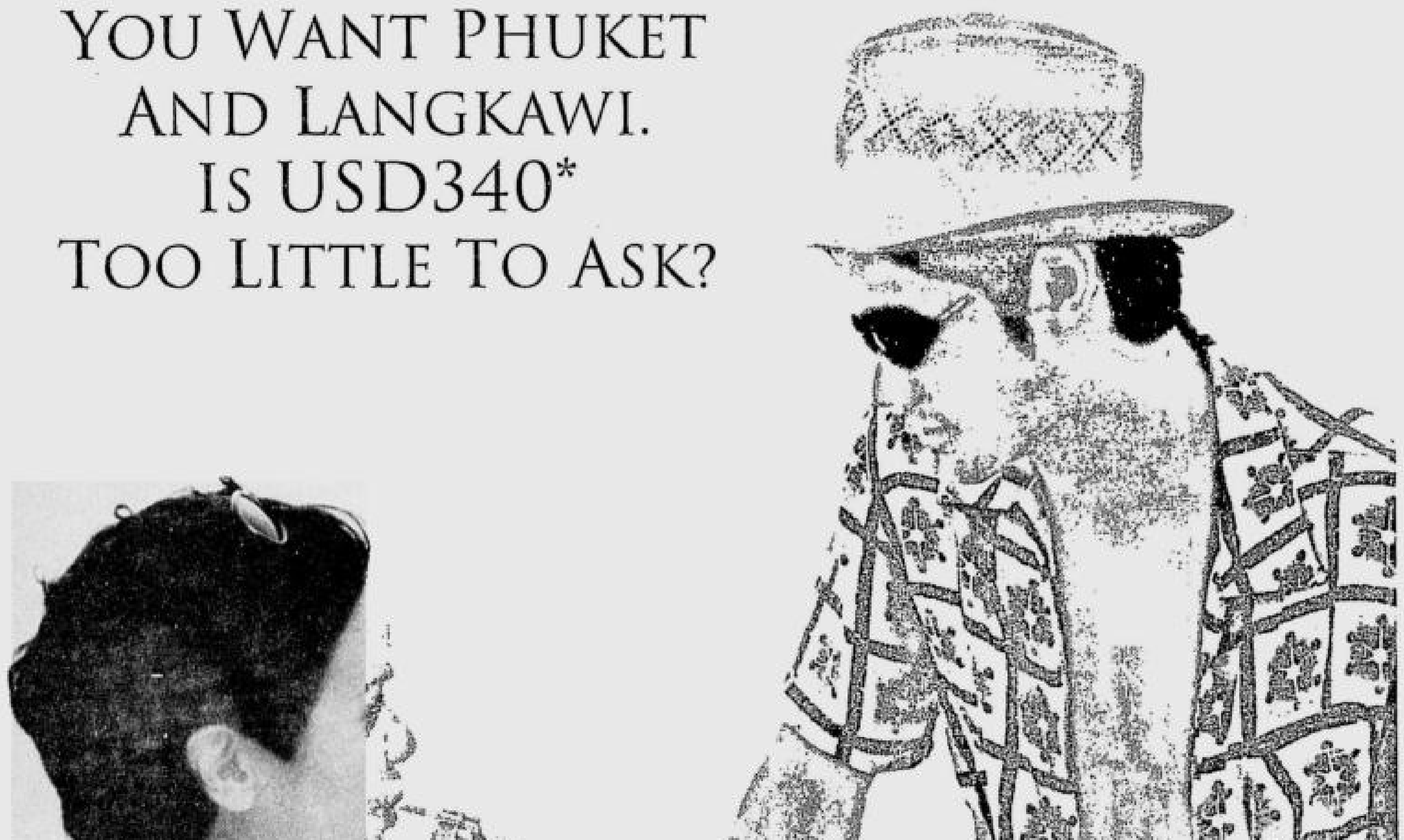

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Young doctor wins international rights award

From page A1

Ernest "Che" Guevarra. She sent the message from Manila after reading reports on the renewed fighting in Pikit.

The mother, Edna, 55, knew that as thousands of displaced men, women and children crowded into evacuation centers, Ernest would be there. She knew that as the hostilities between government troops and separatist rebels intensified, Ernest's life would be among those put at risk.

But she also knew there was no stopping her son, a human rights activist dedicated to bringing health services to people caught in conflict zones, and whose work has earned him recognition and praise.

The latest of these is the Reebok Human Rights Awards for 2003, which cited Ernest and four other activists from Sierra Leone, New York and San Diego in the United States and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

A graduate of the University of the Philippines, Ernest is the first Filipino recipient of the award.

He relayed the news to his mother but he declined to talk at length about the award, saying it came at an inappropriate time because of the continuing crisis in Central Mindanao and certain parts of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"I can't feel the magnitude of the thrill," he said. "It's recognition for what I have done, but the situation here is so overwhelming for me to even think about it. With the human suffering here, I can't see the value of my work. Ultimately, I can say that it's joy amidst sorrow."

Ernest is a director of Balik Kalipay (literally "bring back the joy"), a nongovernment organization that started operations in Pikit in January 2001.

It works for the psychosocial rehabilitation of children in conflict areas, and is financed by the Royal Danish Ministry.

Started in 1998, the Reebok Human Rights Award recognizes young activists who have made significant contributions to human rights causes through nonviolent means.

It aims to generate positive international attention for the recipients and to support their efforts.

Ernest and the other four awardees will receive a $50,000 grant from the Reebok Human Rights Foundation. They will be honored on April 10 at the Shubert Theater in Boston, Massachusetts.

In the notes that accompanied its announcement of the awards, Reebok said the then 18-year-old Ernest's month-long stay in a remote village in Luzon along with other students allowed him to see first-hand "the suffering that stems from political conflict, extreme poverty and the lack of adequate health care."

It was this experience that "galvanized his commitment to fight for the rights of the vulnerable and the disadvantaged."

Reebok also quoted Ernest as saying: "I have learned that disease is not only caused by a germ or a vector, but also by the social, economic, political and environmental conditions in which people live. And to treat the disease, doctors should also find ways to change the conditions that maintain and breed the disease."

Kabayan …

From page A1

caster or television host at the same time.

De Castro presented this argument before a Manila court in response to a petition by the lawyers' group Social Justice Society (SJS) which had questioned his hosting of media shows.

"There is nothing unethical or illegal for respondent to host a television program while discharging the functions of his office as senator," De Castro said in his 16-page comment dated Feb. 12.

De Castro hosts the magazine program "Magandang Gabi Bayan," which is broadcast over ABS-CBN every Saturday.

Sen. Loren Legarda, who also hosts a TV show, is the other respondent in the case, which is being tried by Judge Placido Marquez of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 40. Legarda has yet to file her comment.

De Castro said that SJS, a party-list group headed by Samson Alcantara, had no legal standing and that the group's arguments lacked merit.

SJS based its complaint on Section 7 of Republic Act No. 6713, or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Employees. The provision bars public officials and employees "from engaging in the private practice of their profession unless authorized by the Constitution or law, provided that such practice will not conflict or tend to conflict with their official functions."

De Castro said the issue should be looked at not only in the context of RA 6713 but also in the context of Section 12, Rule XVIII of the Revised Civil Service Rules and of Memorandum Circular 15-99 of the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

They impose absolute prohibition only when the duties of a public official or employee require that his entire time be at the disposal of the government.

De Castro contends that the prohibition is not absolute and that public officials are allowed to exercise their profession under limited instances.

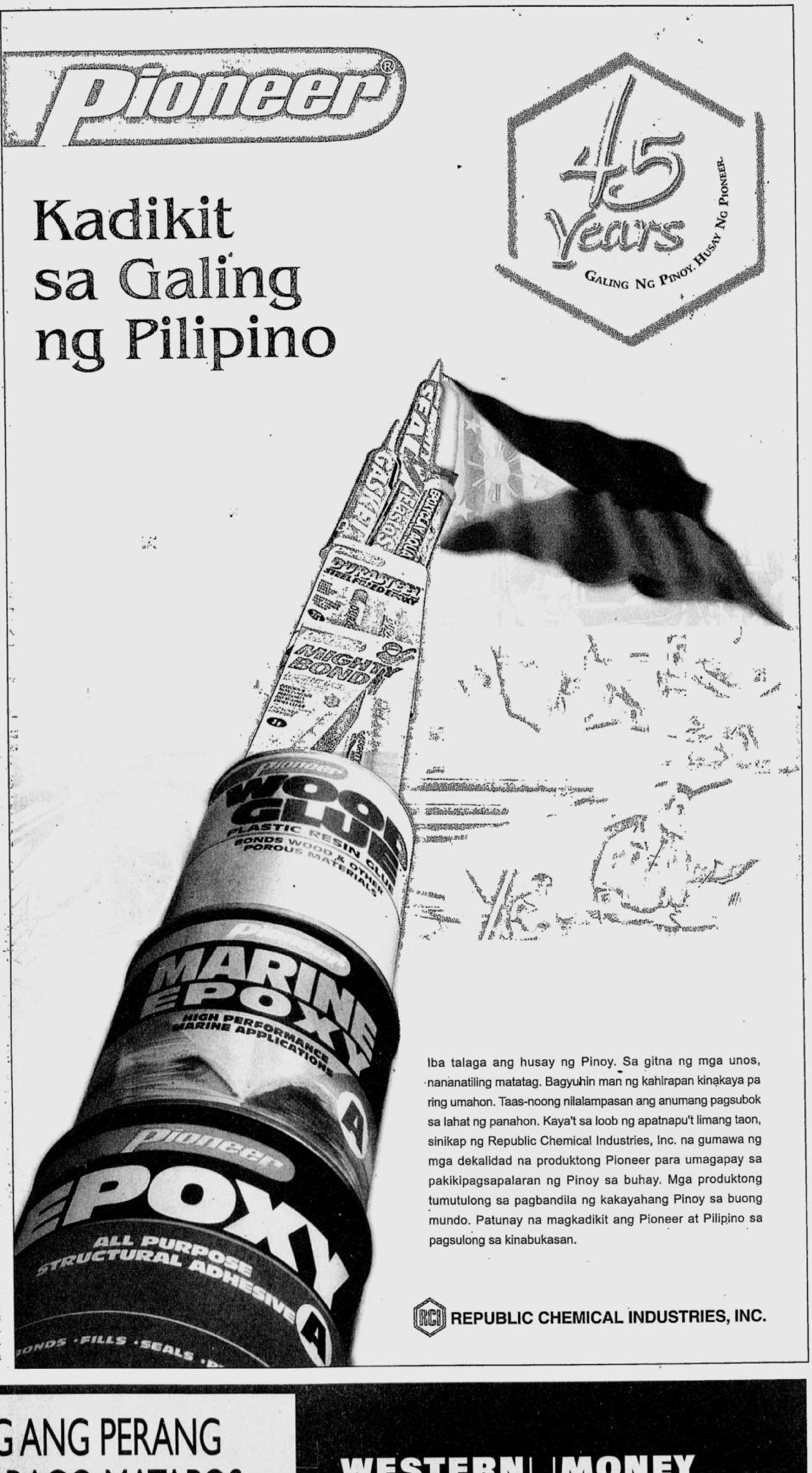
The CSC allows a public servant to engage in private business or profession as long as it is done outside office hours.

But there should be no real or apparent conflict of interest between his private interest and public duties.

"By merely acting as television host, respondent does not have any substantial interest in the business of the broadcast company he works for. The interest of the broadcast corporation cannot be affected by the faithful performance of respondent's official duty as legislator," he said.

A senator's duty and responsibility do not require that his entire time be at the disposal of the government, according to De Castro. He cited Section 15, Article VI of the Constitution, which fixes the regular session or working time of members of Congress.

Moreover, De Castro said he did not regard broadcasting or hosting TV shows as a profession. A profession, he said, was defined by a 1986 opinion of the Department of Justice as "a calling which requires the passing of an appropriate government board or bar examination." One does not need to pass a board exam to be a broadcaster or TV anchor.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Sandigan: No house arrest for Erap

SAYING it was not buying the argument that "national reconciliation" rested on whether Joseph Estrada was placed under house arrest or not, the Sandiganbayan for the second time denied yesterday the deposed president's petition to be let out of hospital detention for the remainder of his plunder trial.

The anti-graft court's special division denied for lack of merit Estrada's motion appealing the June 2001 ruling of the Sandiganbayan's third division that had junked his original petition for house arrest.

The special division shot down the three arguments put up by the Estrada camp: that he deserved special treatment as a former head of state; that there was a clamor from "various sectors," including Congress, for house arrest and that placing him under house arrest would "restore peace and normalcy" in the country.

"This court is not the proper institution for transmuting and releasing political or social tension," said the Sandiganbayan in its five-page resolution.

The court, it said, remains "constrained to apply" the equal protection clause of the Constitution with regard to detention prisoners charged with a capital offense like Estrada, on trial for 22 months now for plunder.

There is no law, it added, "classifying former presidents as *sui generis* and entitling them to detention time in the comfort and confines of their very own homes."

For if the court granted Estrada's petition, it would "create a privileged class without statutory authority," the ruling said.

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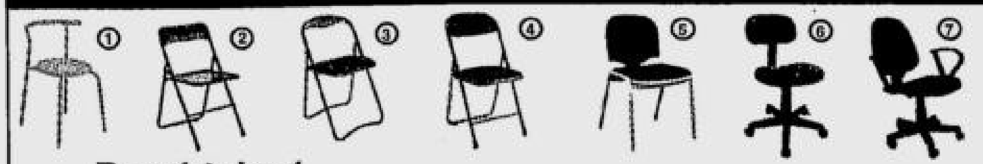

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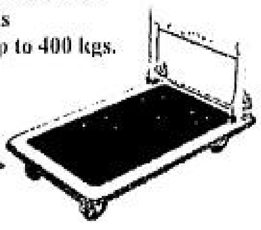

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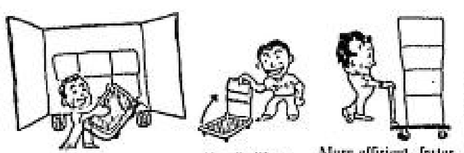

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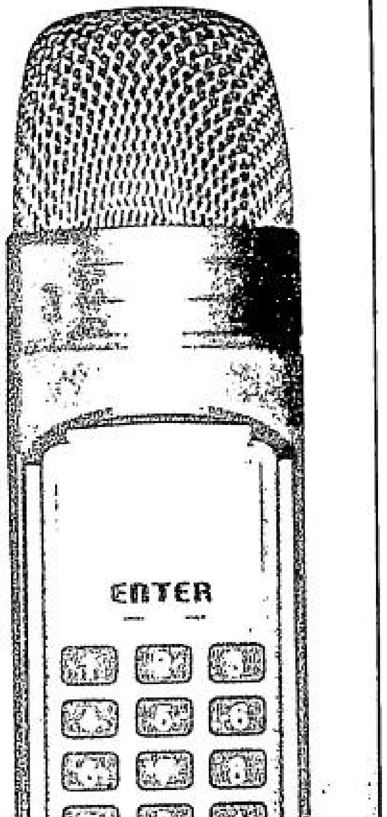

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INQUIRER

Vol. 18 No. 75
ISSN
0116-2642

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2003

The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. has its business and editorial offices at
• Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
• P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
• Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
• Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 • Advertising 897-4807
• Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 /
528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.

Publisher **Isagani Yambot**
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Eager for combat

EDITORIAL

AMERICAN troops will be back later this year, and this time they may actually see action against the Abu Sayyaf in the jungles of Sulu.

President Macapagal-Arroyo announced earlier this week that she had given the go-ahead for another joint military exercise with the US armed forces, called Balikatan 03-1. Like last year's Balikatan which lasted all of six months, top administration officials say the new military exercises will see US Special Forces training, advising and assisting Filipino troops. "There will be no combat" for the US troops, Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said, although they will be allowed to shoot back if fired upon.

The occasion for fighting back could arise more easily in Sulu than in Basilan, the site of the earlier Balikatan. And it is not necessarily because the Abu Sayyaf has threatened to give American troops a "welcome" the moment they land in Sulu; the Abu Sayyaf has been shown quite often to have a bark that is much bigger than its bite. The presence of American troops in Sulu could be very provocative, given the bitter history of the brutal US pacification campaign on the island. And the tension on this Muslim-dominated island will mount if the United States finally goes to war with Iraq.

In fact, holding the exercises in Sulu appears to be calculated to draw the US forces into combat. Administration officials make no effort to dissemble the objective of the exercises, which is to wipe out the Abu Sayyaf, which has gained international notoriety by kidnapping Filipinos and foreigners alike and beheading some of the hostages. Foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople said the Abu Sayyaf was the main target of the exercises. While saying the Americans would be in Sulu to train and learn, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes admitted that "in the process, it would be easier to fight the Abu Sayyaf." By holding the training in a combat zone, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, a former Armed Forces chief of staff, warned, "We are rendering ourselves vulnerable to the possibility that US forces will be involved in combat operations."

The Americans themselves seem only too eager to join the fray. A US military official in Honolulu has said there was a greater chance that US forces would encounter the Abu Sayyaf during the planned exercises.

Officially, US officials would not confirm if American troops would take part in combat operations. A Pentagon spokesperson was quoted as saying that the specific ways by which the United States can help fight terrorist threats in the Philippines were still being discussed. But the Associated Press quoted an unnamed Washington official as saying that contrary to what Filipino officials, including the President, have been saying, the new exercises would go much further than training. There was new information showing a stronger link between the Abu Sayyaf and international terrorist organizations, the same officials explained.

What these American officials seem to be saying is that the decision to send US troops against the Abu Sayyaf is now for them alone to make. If the evidence warrants, they will take on the Muslim extremist group regardless of what Philippine officials think or what the Constitution says. In other words, no laws or agreements can hold them back if in their judgment the Abu Sayyaf has links with al-Qaida or Jemaah Islamiyah.

Given such terms, any discussions regarding the conduct of new military exercises become useless. Perhaps the Macapagal administration should just tell the Americans to go ahead and fight their war. If the international community cannot hold them back from invading Iraq, how can the Philippines stop them from taking Sulu?

Crisis in Nato

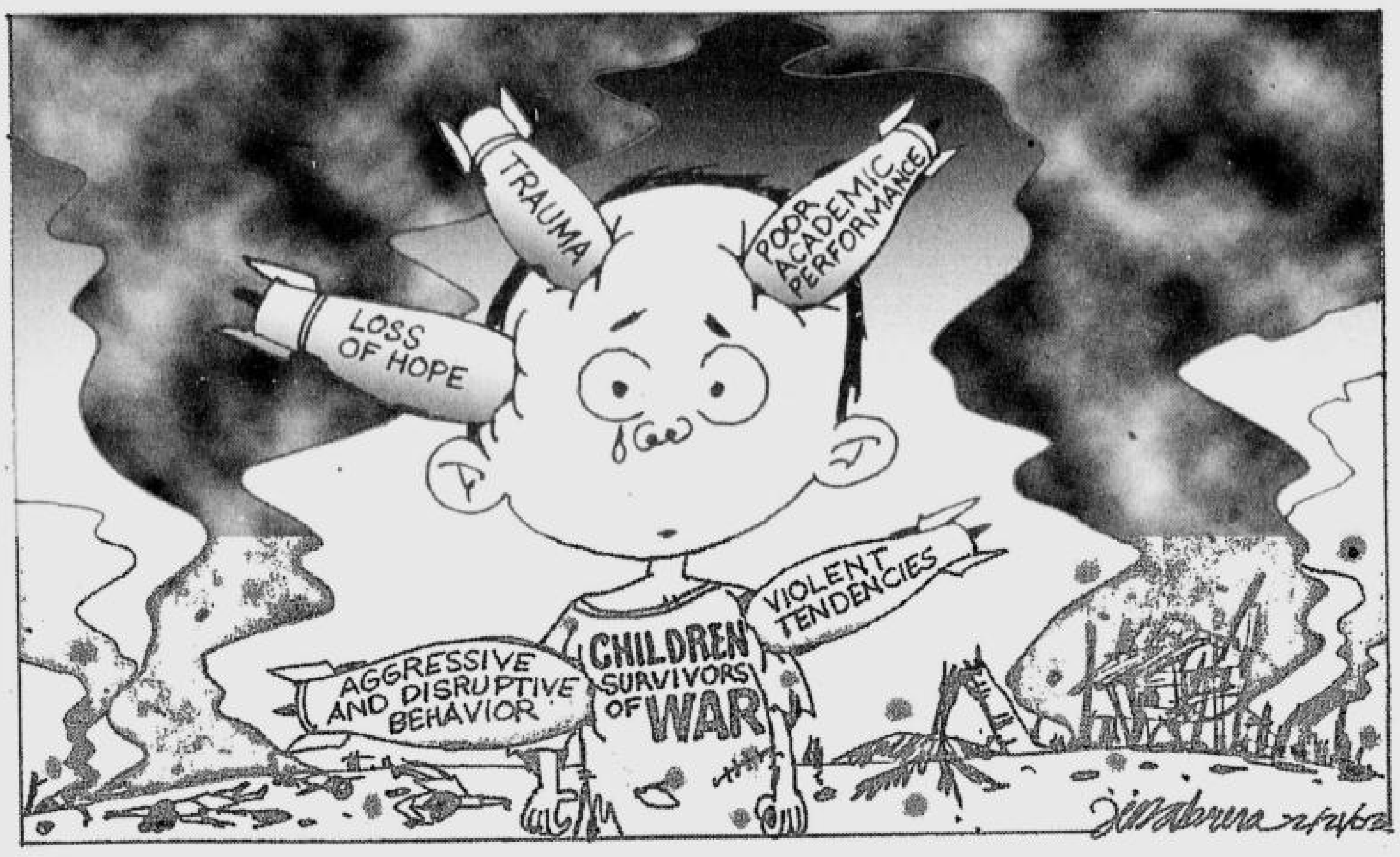
FOREIGN COMMENT

THE UNITED STATES has plunged Nato into deep crisis, from which the "old" alliance will find it hard to recover. And it is clear who is to blame. It is US President George W. Bush with his war-mongering.

The United States paid billions of dollars to Turkey to pressure it into line on the Iraq question. It's not quite so easy with France, Germany and Belgium. This has annoyed the United States to such an extent that it is willing to divide Nato. How can the alliance, which can only function with unanimity, hold together in the future?

What Nato is going through is a foretaste of what will happen at the United Nations. There, too, the United States will ruthlessly try to push its partners into a war against Iraq. And in the end, it won't shy away from subverting this central international institution to its own interests.

Tagesanzeiger (Zurich, Switzerland)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Buses already overcharging their passengers

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

WHERE in the world can you find lawbreakers dictating the policies of the government? Only in the Philippines. And I am not yet referring to the American moles in different government departments influencing policies of the Philippine government. I am referring to the out-and-out violators of our laws: the bus and jeepney operators and drivers, the squatters and the sidewalk vendors. In exchange for violating our laws with impunity, they now dictate to the Metro Manila Development Authority what its policies should be regarding the number coding and the enforcement of traffic rules and regulations. And government officials grit their teeth, bow their heads and follow their dictates. No less than the President of the Philippines pleaded with the operators and drivers not to raise their fares.

The bus operators and drivers agreed not to call a strike against the MMDA's experimental five-day number-coding scheme (which will end today anyway) on certain conditions:

1. That after the experiment, the MMDA will not impose the number coding permanently.
2. MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando promised to consult transport groups first before coming to a decision that would affect them.
3. Bus operators will pay only half of the fines for their units caught violating the number coding.
4. Drivers of public utility vehicles will just pay the highest fine on their tickets and not the accumulated fines for all the violations on their tickets.

The PUV operators and drivers did not make any promise in return, not even to obey traffic rules and regulations at all times. I'm getting confused here: *Sino ba ang dapat masunod, ang* law enforcers *o ang* lawbreakers?

Now PUV drivers can violate traffic rules repeatedly. Anyway, a driver will pay you only one fine, the highest, even if he has been apprehended 10 times. The nine other violations will be forgiven.

The bus associations did not promise either to follow the MMDA decision if the experiment proves that the number-coding scheme for buses improved the traffic situation the most. The MMDA will impose the number-coding scheme only on private vehicles starting Monday. At the end of the experiment, the MMDA will decide on which to impose the scheme permanently, on the private vehicles, the buses, the jeepneys, or on all. You can be sure that if it is the first option, the owner of private vehicles will accept it meekly. But if it is the last three, the PUV groups will surely howl in protest and even go on strike.

Come to think of it, a bus or jeepney strike may be the best thing that can happen to Metro Manila. The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board under Dante Lantin, if it has any balls, can then cancel the franchises of those who go on strike because that is a violation of the condition of their franchise.

Our problem is not the implementation of gimmicks to reduce the number of vehicles out in the streets, such as color coding and number coding. Our problem is that there are too many franchises given out by the LTFRB to bus and jeepney operators. Anybody who is not blind can see that in the bumper-to-bumper line of buses crawling the whole length of Edsa. Anybody can see that in the long lines of jeepneys waiting for passengers in their "terminals" on the city streets. Jeepney drivers spend more time sleeping and waiting in their jeepneys than in driving them. There are just too many of them. Anybody can also see that in the long lines of tricycles almost everywhere. There are already too many of them but that is not the fault of the LTFRB but of the local government units which issue the franchises to tricycles.

We have too many vehicles in too few streets. To repeat the saying, you can't put two pounds of s--t in a one-pound bag. So the solution to the traffic congestion—besides enforcing traffic laws strictly—is to reduce the number of vehicles out in the streets. One way is to reduce the number of franchises issued. We don't need that many buses, we can all plainly see that all of them are less than half-filled.

The bus associations claim that many of these are colorums. All right, why don't they help the LTFRB and the MMDA to apprehend these colorums? Does the LTFRB even have a record of the number of franchises it has issued, and the number of units that is just right for our streets and the volume of passengers?

PUV groups say that there are more private vehicles than PUVs so it must be the former who are at fault for the traffic congestion. Yes, there are more private vehicles, but most of them are out in the streets only during the trip from house to office and back. Most of them stay the longest periods in parking places. PUVs, on the other hand, are out in the streets most of time. And it is their drivers who are the most unruly as they compete with one another to pick up passengers.

PUVs want to increase fares again because fuel prices have also increased again. At first glance, this seems justified. But look again. They want a one-peso-per-kilometer increase in fare, but the increase in fuel price is only 50 centavos per liter. You divide this 50-centavo increase among passengers in a bus which probably averages 50. How can that justify a one-peso-per-km fare increase?

And with each bus only half-full, bus operators should be losing money and should shift their units to other more profitable routes. But why are they still there? And why are the colorums flocking there, too?

The only conclusion is that the Edsa route is still profitable. The buses must be overcharging their passengers. That is why they are still fighting for the Edsa route despite the low passenger volume.

Justice

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

I'M glad we never lost sight of Acsa Ramirez or consigned her to yesterday's news. I still think she should have been our Person of the Year, notwithstanding that that category applies to someone who had the most impact on the nation, good or bad. In these days of horrendously diminished expectations, indeed of Filipinos despairing of their nation and longing to live elsewhere, we could have done with having someone to inspire us. That is not Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

It was a welcome piece of news, the Ombudsman finally clearing Ramirez of any wrongdoing in the irregularity she helped expose. How she got into that mess in the first place we have to thank our Person of the Year, GMA, and her NBI director, Reynaldo Wycoco. Ramirez, for those who have already forgotten, was the cashier in the Binangonan branch of LandBank who exposed a P431-million tax diversion scam by her superiors. It was a luminous act of courage, an ordinary person doing an extraordinary deed, and one that exposed Ramirez and her family to great harm.

Instead of being rewarded for it, Ramirez found herself in the most unenviable of situations. While on stage, GMA and Wycoco mistakenly pointed to her as one of the perpetrators of the scam and not its whistle-blower. It was humiliation to the core, doubly so as it completely reversed expectation. The mistake became immediately apparent afterward, but Ramirez's *kalbaryo*, or Lenten ordeal, did not end there.

Instead of righting a wrong by apologizing to her, GMA and Wycoco stood pat on their mistake and insisted she was guilty after all. To prove their point, they filed a case against her with the Ombudsman. Had she been proven guilty, she would have served pretty much the rest of her life in jail for 11 citations.

These facts are fairly well known. What I myself did not know, which I read about just the other day, was the extent to which Ramirez had been deprived since she decided to expose the scam. As a result of it, she has been forced into hiding with her husband in a safe house, away from their children. Though she keeps in touch with the kids through various means, she is unable to see them. The kids are under protection too. "They're okay," Ramirez told our paper, "but I still don't live with them."

To be condemned to live that life for close to a year, and to have a jail term hanging on one's head—and the possible derision of the world to fall on one's children—is intolerable. Unfortunately for me, my powers of empathy are strong, and the thought of being removed from my loved ones for doing a good deed, and simply because my President and chief law enforcer think their egos are more important than my life and wellbeing, fills me with outrage.

One cannot imagine the sense of relief Ramirez must feel at having the Sword of Damocles removed from her head. It is understandable how she can say, "I thank God I was able to endure all of this. Even though I am just a small person, I was given justice. There is still justice in this country." Indeed, showing further what a class act she is, in stark contrast to her presumed superiors, the President and chief law enforcer of this land, she exhorts ordinary citizens like her to expose corruption in spite of what happened to her. "Those who know of any anomaly should not be frightened to report it."

But no, there is no justice in this country. Not from where I stand. The monumental injustice is not just that Ramirez was prosecuted and threatened with imprisonment. It is that she was not officially recognized for what she did; it is that she was publicly humiliated at the very moment she deserved the praise and gratitude of her President; it is that she was sent off to live a desperate life after having risked everything to damn iniquity. That Ramirez should be found innocent is not justice, it is common sense. That Ramirez is restored to her former life while reaping the rewards, moral and material, she richly deserves, that is justice.

Virginia Pinlac, Ramirez's lawyer, a class act herself, says they would not demand an apology from GMA or Wycoco or sue the pants off them. "We would rather not. Wycoco and GMA should know what to do."

Ah, but they don't. Even now Wycoco, head of the National Bureau of Inquisition, is aghast that Ramirez should be acquitted by the Ombudman. He says the NBI will try to find out why Ramirez was cleared while Ramon Joven and Artemio San Juan, Ramirez's predecessor and boss respectively, were not. You can't understand that? Try, because Ramirez is innocent and the two are guilty. What can I say? Wycoco, *mahiya-hiya ka naman sa sarili mo*. Or never mind being ashamed of yourself, be ashamed of the NBI, an institution that carried with it much prestige in the past. Better still, be ashamed.

The same is true of GMA who may imagine that ignoring the bad dream will make it go away. No, it won't. It will cling to her like the odor that forms from dried sweat, and follow her wherever she goes. It will well up inside her every utterance about unity and reform like air blowing up a bubble and burst it. And all because of lack of class: How hard can it be to admit a mistake and say sorry?

No, there is no justice in this country. Not until civil society or the civic groups, like the Lions and the Rotary, defy GMA and Wycoco and pin a medal on Ramirez for showing courage over and beyond the call of duty. Not until the business sector, the Church and the schools defy GMA and Wycoco and put up Ramirez as the ideal Christian citizen we should have more of. Not until government officials themselves defy GMA and Wycoco and ask Ramirez to forgive their bosses, they know not what they do.

Not until we learn to become the class act Ramirez is.

***

Comments to dequiros@vasia.com

Toughest test

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

NEARLY two months after President Macapagal-Arroyo announced she was stepping down from Malacañang in mid-2004, she has now run into the toughest test of her political will to get things done.

One of her key economic reform bills, the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA), is locked in a stalemate at the congressional bicameral committee over the House and Senate versions of the bill. The President's version of the amendments are reflected in the House-approved bill. This means that it is easier to whip the House behind the Palace than the Senate; and the Senate's recalcitrance has something to do with its more fractious composition and precarious control of the President's allies in the chamber.

Congress has until March 15 to arrive at a compromise and panels of both chambers are reworking the bill so that the country will not be slapped with penalties by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) if it fails to enact a law containing amendments desired by the FATF.

The other day, the President repeated the mantra that she wants to bequeath the nation the legacy of a strong economy and a less corrupt political system, saying she had decided not to run in the 2004 elections in order to free her hands from constraints of pursuing these goals.

The repetition of this pledge is getting to be tiresome because it is flying in the face of her flagging capacity to push her reforms. The standoff in the bicameral conference committee over the AMLA amendments reflects first of all her incapacity to push the House version, which is more compatible to her preferences. Again, the Senate has stymied her project, and this resistance can only be partly explained by the argument that the administration senators are sitting on a knife's edge in the chamber in terms of numbers.

One of the key points of resistance raised by the Senate version is the argument that the removal of judicial consent to allow scrutiny of bank accounts suspected of being "dirty money" contravenes an important and long-standing foundation of the Philippine banking system—the confidentiality of bank deposits.

Playing the nationalist card, senators argue that breaching this tradition could not only open the inspection process to abuse for possible political witch hunt but more important, violate Philippine sovereignty. This is so, according to this argument, because under threat of tough economic penalties from the FATF, the Philippines is surrendering control of its economic and monetary policy to an external, international agency.

It is not a surprise that this nationalist and sovereignty argument should come from the Senate. Historically, the Senate has been the wellspring of economic and political nationalism, and no doubt many senators are very much aware of the nationalist tradition of the chamber.

But in assessing whether to concede to demands for more intrusive intervention of international bodies in the Philippine banking system, it might be well to consider whether shedding a degree of autonomy in the banking system for tighter international regulation would result in benefiting the larger national interests.

It must be remembered that the world has gone far with the concept of the integration of the international trading system and economic relationships, so much so that nation states have to cede part of their economic sovereignty to larger international bodies in which they are members.

Old-fashioned early 20th century nationalism was stoutly jealous about preserving national sovereignty, but following the second half of that century, many nations have accepted the notion that in the process of developing supranational institutions, nation states have to give up some autonomy to gain larger advantages. The most startling example of this tendency is the development of the European Union, the European Economic Community and recently, the adoption of the single European currency, the euro.

The new perspective of shrinking nation-state economic and monetary autonomy should help illuminate the debate in this country over the AMLA amendments.

That said, let me go back to the very important issue of the capacity of President Macapagal to exercise political will in pushing the amendments. Her efforts to overcome Senate resistance have not broken the deadlock. There is an increasing perception that perhaps, her decision to step down in 2004 has, after all, made her a lame duck.

The President has already reinstalled a mechanism to reach consensus and break stalemates—the Ledac—but this formula has not produced results in the Senate counterpart of the bicameral committee. The opposition leader, Sen. Edgardo Angara, is a believer in consensus and likes to remind the public that during the Ramos administration, he as Senate president, worked very well with Speaker Jose de Venecia in forging a consensus on a legislative agenda, through the Ledac.

Indeed, Angara has gone into a historic compromise with President Macapagal over a legislative agenda, but obviously the Ledac concept is foundering over the very contentious AMLA amendments.

The President does not have either the coercive and/or persuasive capacity to make the Senate come around to her own version of the AMLA and she is discovering that her writ is as large as it embraces only the House.

The eyes of the nation are focused on the battle over the AMLA amendments. The outcome will determine not only the standing of the Philippines in being a member of an international supervisory body controlling the flow of "dirty" money. In domestic political terms, it will show whether the President still has the capacity to carry out her political will or has, indeed, become a lame duck.

The human dimension

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ONE of the first things the team of "diagnosticians" assembled by former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori looked at in their efforts to restructure the country's tax system was the revamp of the tax collection bureau.

As Manuel Estela, former head of the revamped Peruvian tax authority known as Sunat, tells it, the employees of the old tax authority (the equivalent of our own BIR) labored under shamefully low salaries even as they lived extravagant lifestyles. But to have the new tax policies and tax code effectively implemented, Estela said the country needed to have tax officials and bureaucrats "who were not just competent and efficient, but were also ethical."

Estela envisioned a tax authority peopled by the elite of the professions, where "our best and most senior auditors would be able to sit down and discuss on an equal basis with auditors of the big companies." And this, he realized, could be done only if employees were paid well, receiving "salaries that were competitive and a little more."

Thus, part of the tax reform law that became the basis for the creation of the Sunat allowed the agency to offer salaries way above standard rates. A senior official at that time (the early 1990s) could receive the equivalent of as much as US$5,000 a month, while someone at a mid-level position could earn as much as US$1,000 a month. Note that at this time, the average salary for a tax official was a mere US$40 a month.

Offering high salaries not only made it possible for Sunat to attract highly qualified professionals, it also made bribery and corruption less attractive options. But to qualify for the upgraded salary rates, Estela's team made clear to the employees that they would need to pass a battery of tests on not just technical excellence but also honesty and probity.

* * *

EMPLOYEES were required to take a competency exam administered by academic institutions. In addition, everyone also had to go through an "ethics exam," a psychological test supplemented by an hour-long interview with the social scientists and behavioral experts in the team. In addition, the team conducted background investigations on all the employees, seeking the cooperation of the judiciary, the police and local authorities.

Most effective, said Estela, was a call he made to the public for anyone with information on the "extracurricular" activities of tax officials. Anyone who was able to maintain more than one family, for instance, immediately fell under suspicion. They even made a "hotline" number available for informants. The background investigation, says the usually laconic economist with a smile, "had the full approval of all women of Peru."

Those who chose not to undergo the competency and ethics exams were offered voluntary retirement packages. At the beginning, recalls Estela, the old tax authority had 3,000 officials and employees. About a thousand chose voluntary retirement (perhaps content to slink off with their loot?), while 2,000 decided to go through the battery of tests. Of these, 500 passed, and Estela is profuse with praise about their quality and worth to Sunat, providing the "institutional memory" on which the new tax authority would be founded.

* * *

MOST of the 500 "old-timers" were women, Estela notes, admiring how "they were able to stay honest in an agency with a culture of corruption." One of his most cherished "souvenirs" from his stint as head of Sunat, recalls Estela, was the time a senior employee, a woman, approached him and told him: "Thank you for what you have done. I have waited for this change for 15 years!"

"We must be very careful," says Estela about handling the human dimension of such a radical reform of the bureaucracy. "Even while we insist that the principle of honesty must be the basis for all transactions, you must observe patience and objectivity. You cannot judge people wholesale."

Sunat, the "new" rejuvenated tax collection agency almost immediately proved its worth. From a tax collection rate of just 5 percent of GDP in 1990, Peru reported a tax collection rate of 10.9 percent of GDP in 1992, doubling tax collection in a mere two years.

But Sunat proved its worth not just in fiscal terms. The new agency, says Estela "gave Peruvian society the image of honesty," with the new bureaucracy, composed of a mix of the 500 remaining employees and the "best and brightest" of university graduates, proving that it was possible to work in the bureaucracy and retain the respect of your peers and of society.

For his part, Estela says he looked on Sunat as his "fourth son," an agency he had nursed from "conception," when he and his team were still carrying out their diagnosis, to its "birth" after the passage of the comprehensive tax reform law, and thence through its early years.

* * *

IT was not an entirely happy ending, though. "The history of Sunat is linked to the history of Fujimori," Estela says. Even as he started out his term full of resolve to reform Peruvian government, Fujimori, especially after he gained more and more power, grew ever softer on the vested interests he initially sought to neutralize. Gradually, after Estela retired from the authority, Sunat began to lose its autonomy, which Estela believes is "essential" to the success of any tax authority.

The saving grace of the agency proved to be the people of Sunat, the agency's "human capital." With some remaining members of the original team that Estela put together, the tax officials resisted political influence as much as they could, so that when a new administration took over after Fujimori's exile, Sunat was able to once more prove its enduring value to Peru, and serve as an example to other similarly placed countries like ours.

Lingering questions

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

PEOPLE always ask me why I chose history as a profession. My standard answer is that I am a mutant in the Ocampo clan, I cannot deal with numbers and took an AB course because it required only six units of math. Science was not one of my strong points either but watching those fascinating Discovery Channel documentaries on forensic doctors often makes me rethink the road not taken. While leafing through my father's collection of detective novels I was surprised to discover that Earle Stanley Gardner, my father's all-time favorite, dedicated each book to a forensic doctor who is instrumental in solving crime. While I never read my father's paperbacks I shared his interest in the TV series "Quincy Jones, MD" about a forensic doctor solving crime. Then there was a book that suggested that Napoleon did not die of natural causes but was poisoned slowly to avoid detection. Was there a similar whodunit in Philippine history?

One afternoon, after the board of the National Historical Institute had finished its business, the two senior members (now deceased) Teodoro A. Agoncillo and E. Aguilar Cruz, were discussing how the latter had found a Juan Luna watercolor behind a stack of used picture frames in the back driveway of the National Library building. This Luna watercolor depicting a Philippine flag was made in Leitmeritz in 1899 when Luna, as diplomatic representative of the Aguinaldo government, was visiting Ferdinand Blumentritt. This watercolor is now in the Filipiniana section of the National Library. Later, the true cause of Luna's death in Hong Kong in December 1899 was discussed. Officially, Luna died of a heart attack but Agoncillo and Cruz whispered conspiratorially trying to figure out a suspect. Unfortunately, there was no reliable historical source on which to hang even a shred of doubt. Then I came across a secondary source, newspaper articles by Alfonso Ongpin in 1949 that stated:

"I used to frequent the residence of the brother, Don Pepe [Jose Luna], reputable toxicologist who on one occasion told me verbally that his brother Juan died, treacherously poisoned in Hong Kong by a compatriot of ours. This was also confirmed by his only son Andres Luna San Pedro, creator of notable buildings and magnificent mansions that are now standing in this capital and in the provinces."

Here was a published source that could be quoted but it was still hearsay. Unfortunately, Luna was cremated and we cannot have an autopsy made today. Then a primary source turned up in a recent book on Tomas Arejola by Evelyn Soriano. In a letter to Arejolla dated April 19, 1900, Laureana vda. De Luna, [mother of the Luna brothers] to Arejola said:

"In the midst of misfortune and overwhelming solitude, I am consoled to know that you have risen above base and petty calumnies by doing justice to the tragic death of my Antonio. Believe me that in the near future, history, being above vile and crude passions, will trace in gold the name of he who was a victim of duty, if not the envy of his detractors.

"I have no ambition of making the names of my sons, Juan and Antonio, appear side by side with that of Rizal. I only wish that posterity would do them justice and that their memory would cause a tear to fall from the bottom of people's hearts. With this I will die in peace, perhaps pardoning in my last moment their murderers. This is the most an afflicted mother can do to reciprocate the loving words with which you honor her sons."

We all know Antonio Luna was murdered by Aguinaldo's bodyguards but was Juan Luna also murdered? Ongpin probably had the name of the suspect in his yet unpublished biography of Luna but he was prudent enough to avoid libel by keeping quiet. The late Austin Coates came to the rescue with a copy of Luna's death certificate in Hong Kong. When I received a copy I was disappointed because it said simply that Luna died on Dec. 7, 1899 at 2 Lower Castle Terrace. Luna was all set to fetch his son in Manila and take him back to Europe. The steamer made a stopover in Hong Kong and Luna disembarked on Dec. 5 after he complained of chest pains. Dr. Isidoro de los Santos, Dr. Jose Lozada and a certain Dr. Wan Tang declared him out of danger but he suffered a fatal heart attack on Dec. 7. He was 42 years old at the time of death caused by "angina pectoris," literally "pain in the chest" or, in simpler language, a heart attack. The death was reported the next day by a certain A. Martin who was present at Luna's death. The registry was signed by a certain P.P.J. Wodehouse, nephew of the famous author P.G. Wodehouse. So, was it a heart attack and not poison? If it was poison, who murdered him? What was the motive? What had Luna done to deserve such a death?

Over the weekend people will hopefully be talking about the new opera by Ryan Cayabyab and Fides Cuyugan Asensio that tackles the dark side of Luna's genius. Luna murdered his wife and mother-in-law in a celebrated crime of passion in Paris in 1892. Could his death—natural or otherwise—be connected to this crime? Luna's ashes now lie in the San Agustin Church, awaiting advanced forensic examination that will lay this nagging question to rest—was it a heart attack or poison? History beyond textbooks can be very engaging.

* * *

Comments are welcome at ambeth@ateneo.edu

Writing letters

HIGH BLOOD

Eufemia C. Estrada

WE'D also like to know the concerns of the sixtysomething and above, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sit back, conten that all's well with their world and with themselves. —Ed.

ONCE a teacher, always a teacher. Though I have been retired for the past 13 years, I still grab every opportunity to do some informal teaching.

I just hope that in my enthusiasm I've not been too pushy. As the prayer for the middle-aged says (though at 73 I am way past that stage), "I want a few friends in the end."

Anyway, a golden opportunity presented itself last summer. Nana, my 8-year-old grandniece, wanted to know why she wasn't getting any mail although she'd written her cousin Bea in Alabang and her school friend Stefanie. Apparently the two were not into letter writing as she was.

It was with delight therefore that I embarked on letter writing and stamp collecting with Nana who just loves to receive letters by snail mail.

From the very first letter Nana sent me I could see she was a born letter writer No space nor time wasted on "I hope this letter finds you in good condition." Instead she'd drop off tidbits like news tha she and her elder sister Mickee spent two nights with thei cousin Bea and toasted marshmallows on a Baguio vacation

This natural gift she displayed in succeeding letters: "Lola Femy, I don't want to tell you this, but Lolo and Lola sold my baby birds. I really miss my baby birds." So young yet she has learned the pain of letting go of something she loves.

Once she wrote a letter for her younger brother, Noel, 6 just to let me know he would not be going to school for a few days until a "steam burn" in his middle finger had healed Nana made Noel sign the letter and the envelope.

I have to thank the post office and the neighborhood postman for seeing that her letters are delivered to me even if it only says in the envelope, Lola Femy, and a garbled statement of my address. Sometimes she even uses homemade envelopes tha her older sister taught her to make. Nana even mailed me a drawing showing the steps in making the envelope.

One of her letters got as far as the Alabang Post Office bu eventually found its way to me in San Juan.

I don't point out errors in spelling, quite a feat for a retired teacher of English like me, but I try to use the word in my subsequent reply spelled correctly. Like chocolate mousse fo her moss.

To help the post office I stressed the right way of addressing an envelope in my replies which she picks up fast.

The letters we exchange do not contain earth-shaking news but everyday news we could easily share on my frequent visits or over the phone. But Nana looks for the thrill o getting letters by post.

In fact the letter-writing bug has also bitten her older siste Mickee who has asked for letters, too. Mickee, who loves to draw, even sent me a portrait of "Lola Femy when she was 12."

Mickee's first letter to me took all of two weeks to reach me. And I'm not blaming the post office for the snail's pace. It is a wonder the letter got to me at all. The envelope was badly battered because Mickee had enclosed a bead necklace she had made for me as a token of thanks for the stamps I sen her. This time I had to explain why the letter took so long in arriving. No such enclosures are really allowed but the post office bent over backwards to accommodate a budding lette writer. At 8, Nana on the other hand, has designed her signature and affixes this to her letters.

Then one day Nana called me up to say she had just received my latest letter, that she was answering it, but for me to stop writing her.

I had seen it coming. Her last letters had lost their spontaneity with questions like "What are you doing right now?"

Letter writing had become a pressure. Sometimes, she explained, "I get your letter late in the afternoon and soon it will be night and I have no more time to answer it."

No amount of reassurance that it was all right to answe the letter later would convince her. In a way I am glad she feels this way as putting off answering a letter usually end up with unanswered letters.

Hopefully, next summer she will feel like letter writing again. And when she's older and shows interest, I will introduce her to pen pal writing which I enjoyed for many years It will hone her writing skills—expressing her ideas in words improve her spelling and expand her horizons.

Eufemia C. Estrada, 73, used to write a column for the Lifestyle section of the INQUIRER *titled "Cooking Made EC."*

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO . . .?

Lumbao's rebellion case

RONALD Lumbao, president and spokesperson of the People's Movement Against Poverty, was arrested on April 25, 2002, in Novaliches, Quezon City. His arrest stemmed from a rebellion case filed against him on Oct. 11, 2001 with the Manila Regional Trial Court for allegedly instigating the bloody siege of Malacañang on May 1, 2001. The case has been assigned to Judge Teresa Soriaso of Branch 27.

The PMAP is closely identified with deposed President Joseph Estrada.

In filing the case, the Department of Justice cited a speech Lumbao delivered at Edsa on April 30, 2001, where he allegedly urged the crowd: "*Lusubin ang* Malacañang! *Lusob! Lusob! Ngayon na, ngayon na, lusob na, lusob na!*" This supposedly prompted Estrada's supporters to attack Malacañang in an attempt to overthrow the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo. Violence erupted in the vicinity of the Palace forcing the President to declare a state of rebellion in the metropolis.

Lumbao was, at first, detained at the Philippine National Police's Anti-Terrorist Task Force detention cell in Camp Crame but was transferred to the Manila City Jail Rehabilitation Center on July 23, 2002.

At the time of Lumbao's arrest, he had a pending omnibus motion with Soriaso, for the recall of the warrant of arrest and the return of his case to the Prosecutors Office for reinvestigation. He also asked that he be allowed to post bail as an alternative. All his motions were denied except for his motion for reinvestigation. He moved for the partial reconsideration of the court's decision but was unsuccessful. Hence, on May 15, 2002, he petitioned the Supreme Court to issue a writ of preliminary injunction directing Soriaso, the DOJ chief, the DILG chief and others to release him with dispatch and without any condition. As an alternative, the petition also asked that he be allowed to post bail.

Meanwhile, Lumbao pleaded not guilty when arraigned on July 10, 2002. On the same date, he also filed a motion for bail. On Aug 5, he next filed a motion to quash/dismiss the case.

On Aug 27, the Supreme Court finally denied Lumbao's petition.

Case status: Soriaso has yet to resolve Lumbao's motion to quash/dismiss. In the meantime, the prosecution proceeds with the presentation of its witnesses. The hearing on Feb. 11 was postponed due to a motion by the defense. It was reset to May 5.

Armin Adina, PDI Research Department

The dilemma many doctors face today

THANK you for tackling the alarming phenomenon of doctors taking up nursing (PDI, Page 10, 3/16/03), in a manner that brought out the complex truth about this issue. Few things are sadder or more ominous than a country that has driven its physicians to such a degree of frustration that they would abandon a vocation they love and flee from their homeland just so that they can have hope for a better life. It is said that doctors are one of the last to feel the economic woes, and the fact that they are hurting enough to leave, imply national wounds that go much deeper than financial.

Your essays and interviews said it well. Contrary to the stereotype still prevalent in the minds of many, most doctors, even highly trained ones, cannot even afford to buy a decent house of their own, much less earn enough to assure their families of a secure financial future. This has been the case for many years now and yet physicians have stayed, mainly because of the strong sense of service that lies in the heart of every person who takes up medicine. Although often forced to work under conditions far from ideal, our sense of patriotism and the deep satisfaction that comes from healing one's own people have kept most of us here. Until recently, even our colleagues in the United States who earn much more than us envied us the fact that we could still work in a country that appreciates its doctors and where the cultures of greed and litigation have not yet infected the practice of medicine. The events of the last several months changed all this.

August to November last year found the entire medical community, particularly doctors, fighting against the passage of a proposed medical malpractice bill that even the most cold-blooded malpractice lawyers in the United Stated have called "too severe" and which most of the medical communities of the developed world called "insane." Even worse than the bill itself, media's systematic demonizing of doctors used as a strategy to lobby for the passage of the bill, resulted in a nationwide witch hunt affecting especially those doctors in the provinces where the growing paranoia of patients worsened the already difficult task of delivering quality medical care amid substandard and sometimes even dangerous conditions.

The numerous position papers submitted last year against the proposed medical malpractice bill stated, among others, that such a law would result in the biggest brain drain the country has ever seen. The exodus we see happening today is but the start of this dire prediction. Much worse will occur should the proposed bill even pass on second reading. Add to this the 10-percent VAT being imposed on health professionals with the blasé advise to just "pass it on to your patients," plus our chaotic political and peace and order situation amid a growing demand for health workers around the world, then the prospect of a poor country deprived of essential medical care becomes very real.

Many problems afflict health care delivery in the Philippines, and our legislators have only to read the position papers submitted by various groups of health workers to know where to start to solve them. We have said everything there is to say about the ill-effects of the proposed malpractice bill and the 10-percent VAT on health care, and we are weary of fighting. We want only to serve our people as healers and we ask our legislators to help us by passing good laws and implementing wise policies. Please help us resist the temptation to leave and make us not regret our decision to stay.

—DR. MINGUITA PADILLA
president, Alliance of Health Professionals for Quality Health Care (AHPO)

US has been wrong before

WHEN the West branded Moammar Gadhafi as a prime proponent of terrorism and imposed an embargo against Libya, we swallowed the line that it would make our world safer. Three decades later, it was shown that Libyan officials are effective peace mediators, at least as proven in the Mindanao experience, and that the Libyan people are generally peace-loving Muslims.

When the Iranians ousted Shah Pahlavi and took control of the US Embassy for more than a year, we had the impression that Iran moved back to the age of barbarians. But two decades later, we realize that they staged the first people power revolt and now they have one of the most civil and peaceful societies in that region.

Now, the United States has its eyes focused on Iraq. Iraq has a sizable Catholic community peacefully co-existing with the Muslim majority. Iraq has also ancient sites which can be classified as world heritage sites. Foremost is Abraham's Tower. These are among the many sites under threat of US bombardment.

The Holy Bible says three beasts will precede the coming of the Anti-Christ. The third of these beasts will be hailed as a world hero but, in the end, he will be judged by history as the one who brought great destruction to mankind. Nostradamus said this third beast would be named Mabus. I wonder why Mabus rhymes with Bush.

Let us listen to the voice of the Pope and other world leaders who oppose a US war against the Iraqi people. The real issue here is a Bush raging like a wildfire.

—JAMES D. FRANCISCO, CFD,
9/F PNB Financial Center,
Macapagal Boulevard, Pasay City

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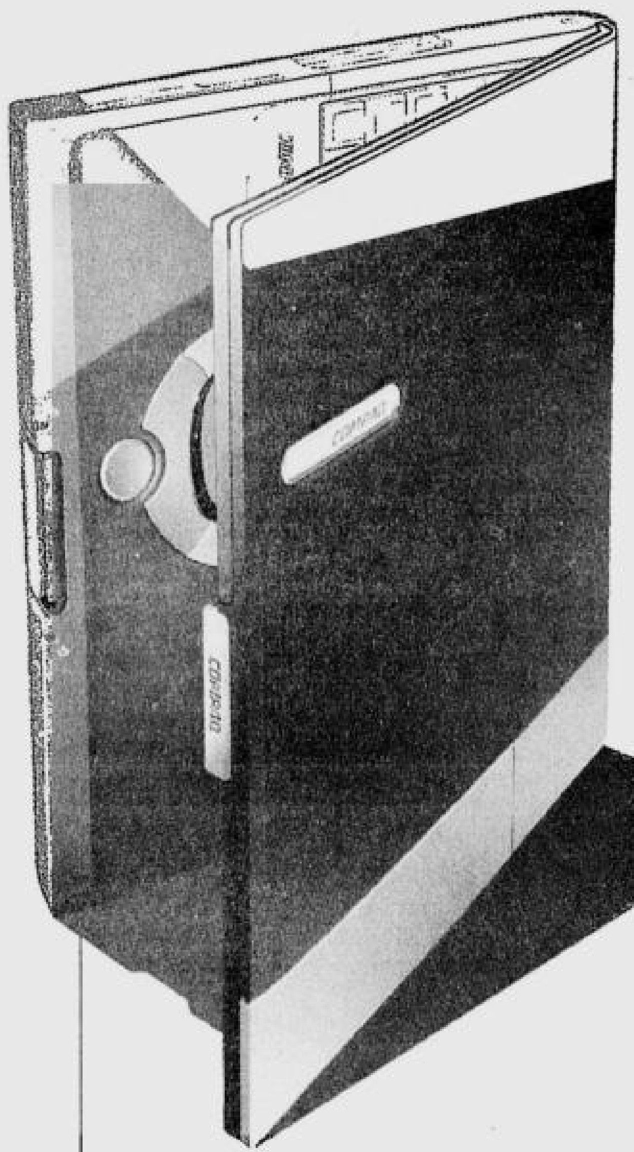

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0806, Series of 2003

On the gov't-MILF conflict in Pikit

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

THIS war has got to stop. It's just senseless. The government should go back to the negotiating table. Even if they capture the Moro Islamic Liberation Front chair, the Muslim situation will remain volatile because war does not address the Muslim problem properly. Indeed, what the military is doing might solve the Muslim insurgency problem temporarily, but they don't realize that they only made matters more complicated for the long term. Soon there will be more rebellions, more Moro rebel groups being formed in the future, more young Muslims wanting to fight the government to the death. The military should at least try looking at the eyes of the young Moro children in the evacuation centers. Behind the awe brought upon by their fascination of the military artillery, there is a carnal desire to be in that situation in the not-so-distant future; fighting the government for Moro rights, and for their love of Allah. Pretty soon, the military will be facing these very same children eventually. Indeed, yet another war is just lurking by.—**ramesh**

* * *

Just look how many army men have died. The military, through the media, has been using dirty tactics to confuse the Filipino public. They are hiding the truth for the simple reason that all their men must follow them blindly. In the military, the officers in particular, are the ones who benefit from the war at the expense of the innocent civilians. This war is not motivated by patriotism.—**robert_snipes**

* * *

We don't tolerate Christian extremism? Why should we cater to Muslim extremism? The majority of the people in Mindanao are not even Muslims. After the Moro National Liberation Front then comes the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and then the Abu Sayyaf, when will this end? We thought peace would come when a pact was signed with the MNLF, then a splinter group, the MILF, comes along and creates the same situation, worse than before. Apply the same rules for everybody. Treat a thug as a thug.—**jofis**

* * *

The political officer as well as the official spokesperson of the MILF are obviously trying to limit the disaster that has befallen their cause when they claimed rather belatedly that they have abandoned their frontline positions as a tactical maneuver (to the layman that means retreat).

Really? Abandoned? Or were they forced to abandon their positions because they had no other choice in the face of a superior force?

Maybe the MILF can still salvage something worthwhile out of its present debacle by grabbing the political package being offered to it, because otherwise if members of the MILF are totally defeated in the field, they may end up with practically nothing at all.—**Rolly S.**

* * *

The bottom line is we (Muslims and Christians) are in the same boat, and we have to learn to live side by side because the alternative is not very good. I believe the general Filipino Christian public is not the problem. I believe that if the Christian national government gives justice to the Muslims, there will be peace in the country. Let us stop this fighting. The country is very poor. We can't afford it. We don't need it.—**kaurakan**

* * *

I just can't understand. Peaceniks like those from militant organizations always cry foul if the military strikes at the MILF. They lament the plight of the evacuees and always blame the military for the displacement of the residents. They say if not for the military there will be no war.

However, when innocent people lose their lives because of the senseless bombings of these rascals, the peaceniks are silent. They don't go to rallies to denounce the brutality of the MILF and the Pentagon group.—**moymoy**

* * *

Killings perpetrated by either side is never acceptable. Remember that for every action, there is a reaction. There is always a cause why one behaves the way he does. To settle this argument, why don't everyone sit down and talk instead of lobbing insults and deadly bombs at each other? This is called diplomacy. There will always be animosities between factions when problems are never solved diplomatically. Otherwise, more dead bodies will litter the countryside senselessly. Listen to the Pope who said that war is immoral.—**baroque**

Sari-saring Gasolinahan.
Iba't ibang Produkto.
Masiglang Serbisyo.
Maraming Mapagpipilian.
ITO ANG DEREGULASYON.

Presyo ng langis sa kalakhang Maynila, February 19, 2003.

LOKASYON / KUMPANYA	ADDRESS	DIESEL	Unleaded Gasoline		
			93 RON		95 RON
			Red	Green	Blue
McArthur Highway, Valenzuela					
Caltex-right	McArthur Highway, Malinta	15.84	20.77	20.13	
Flying V	McArthur Highway, Malinta	15.90	20.77	20.13	
Petron-left	McArthur Highway, Malinta	15.85	20.79	20.13	21.22
Petron-left	McArthur Highway, Malanday	15.85	20.79	20.12	21.19
Shell-right	McArthur Highway, karuhatan	15.90	20.79	20.19	21.15
Shell-right	McArthur Highway, Marulas	15.90	20.79	20.19	
Texas Oil-right	Manotok Subd.	15.80	20.70		
Total-left	McArthur Highway, Karuhatan	15.50	20.79	20.16	
Potrero, Malabon					
Caltex	McArthur Highway, Potrero	15.90	20.79	20.16	
Petron	Maysilo	15.90	20.78	20.16	
Seaoil	McArthur Highway, Potrero	15.90	20.79	20.19	
Shell	Maysilo	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.15
Shell	McArthur Highway, Potrero	15.90	20.79	20.19	21.15
Navotas					
Caltex	M. Naval Street	15.84	20.98	20.16	
Caltex	Rd. 10, Fishery Rd.	15.84	20.98	20.15	
Caltex	Wawa	15.65		20.49	
Petron	North Bay Blvd.	15.80	20.89		
Petron	Jaime O. Lucio	15.85	20.79		21.22
Shell	69 H. Lopez St.	15.89	20.79	20.14	
Grace Park, Kalookan City					
Caltex-right	9th Ave., Rizal Ave., Ext.	15.90	20.29	20.16	
Petron-right	2nd Ave., Rizal Ave., Ext.	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.21
Shell-right	2nd Ave., Rizal Ave., Ext.	15.85	20.79	20.17	21.15
Shell-left	6th Ave., Rizal Ave., Ext.	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.15
Along Araneta Ave.					
Caltex– left	Araneta Ave.	15.90	20.79	20.16	
City Oil-right	1284 Araneta Ave./Calamba St.	15.77	20.70	20.06	
Flying V-left	Araneta Ave./Arquiles	15.88	20.74	20.11	
Shell-left	883 Araneta Ave. Brgy. Tatalon	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.15
Shell-left	Araneta Ave./Ma. Clara	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.15
Shell-right	Araneta Ave./Landargun	15.90	20.80	20.24	21.15
Along Aurora Blvd.					
Caltex-left	Aurora Blvd.	15.90	20.94	20.26	
Petron-right	Aurora Blvd.	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.27
Seaoil	P, Tuazon	15.86	20.73	20.13	
Along Mindanao Ave., Quezon City					
Caltex-right	Mindanao Ave.	15.90	20.79	20.16	
Caltex-left	Mindanao Ave.	15.90	20.79	20.16	
Flying V-right	Mindanao Ave.	15.90	20.76	20.13	
Petron-right	Mindanao Ave.	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.29
Seaoil-right	Mindanao Ave.	15.90	20.76	20.13	
Shell-right	Mindanao Ave.	15.90	20.79	20.15	21.15
Shell-left	Mindanao Ave.	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.15
A. Bonifacio St., Marikina City					
Caltex	A. Bonifacio Ave., Barangka	15.84	20.79	20.16	
Caltex	A. Bonifacio Ave., Tanong	15.84	20.79	20.16	
Petron	J.P. Rizal, Bayan-bayanan, Concepcion	15.82	20.79	20.16	21.32
Petron	Bayan-bayanan, Concepcion	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.27
Petron	Parang	15.90	20.79	20.16	
SeaOil	J.P. Rizal, Nangka	15.90	20.76	20.13	
Shell	A.Bonifacio Ave., Tanong	15.90	20.80	20.17	21.15
Shell	San Roque	15.90	20.77	20.16	21.19
Shell	A. Tuazon Ave., San Roque	15.90	20.80	20.24	21.15
Shell	Sto. Nino	15.96	20.79	20.20	21.15
Paco					
Metro Car Care	Paco	15.65	20.70	19.95	
Petron	P. Gil/San Marcelino, Paco	15.91	20.83	20.23	
Petron	Paco	15.93	20.83	20.28	
Shell	Gen. Luna Paco	15.90	20.75	20.14	
Shell	Tejeron Paco	15.85	20.80	20.16	21.15
Shell	Paco	15.90	20.80	20.24	21.15
Shell	Quirino Ave Paco	15.95	20.75	20.19	21.15
Shell	Quirino Ave Paco	15.95	20.80	20.24	21.15
Domestic Area, Pasay City					
Caltex	MIA Domestic Road	15.91	20.83	20.22	
Caltex	Nayong Pilipino, MIA Road	15.93	20.83	20.22	
Petron	Andrews Avenue	15.91	20.78	20.13	
Shell	Aurora Blvd./Andrews Avenue	15.95	20.81	20.24	21.15
Taguig					
Alpha-Trans	MLQ Street, Bagumbayan	15.96		20.83	
Caltex	East Service Rd.	15.90	20.80	20.24	
Caltex	MLQ Street, Bagumbayan	15.97	20.83		
Lan-Gas	Paraiso St., Upper Bicutan	16.00	20.65	20.30	
Petron	Quezon St.	15.96	20.88	20.33	
Shell	FTI Compound, Western Bicutan	15.90	20.80	20.24	21.15
Along Sucat Road, Parañaque City					
Caltex	NAIA, San Dionisio	15.93	20.84	20.23	
Caltex	San Dionisio, Kabihasnan	15.85	20.79	20.13	
Cityoil	Evacom, Canaynay Ave.	15.87	20.70	20.05	
Petron	Dr. A. Santos Ave., San Dionisio	15.95	20.84	20.23	21.25
Shell	Dr. A. Santos Ave., San Dionisio	15.95	20.84	20.23	21.15
Shell	Sucat Rd./San Antonio Ave.	15.99	20.83	20.28	21.15
Unioil	NAIA Road, Sucat	15.88	20.76	20.10	
MIA rd.					
Caltex	Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat	15.99	20.83	20.28	
Caltex	Dr. A. Santos Ave., Brgy. San Isidro	15.95	20.84	20.23	
Petron	Dr. A. Santos Ave., San Antonio	15.99	20.83	20.28	21.27
Petron	Dr. A. Santos Ave., San Dionisio	15.95	20.84	20.23	21.25
Shell	Dr. A. Santos Ave., San Antonio	15.99	20.83	20.28	21.15
Total	Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat	15.95	20.84	20.23	
Unioil	Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat	15.88	20.76	20.10	
Along National Rd.Muntinlupa City					
Caltex-right	National Road, Tunasan	15.90	20.82	20.27	
Petron-right	National Road, Alabang	15.90	20.82	20.20	21.22
Seaoil-Cupang	Brgy, Cupang	15.99	20.80	20.18	
Shell-right	National Road, Tunasan	15.90	20.80	20.24	21.15
Shell-Left	Tunasan	15.90	20.82	20.27	21.15
Shell-Left	National Road, Tunasan	15.90	20.82	20.27	21.15
Total-Commerce Ace.	Commerce Ave.	16.00	20.80	20.25	
Alabang-Zapote Road, Las Piñas					
Caltex	Alabang-Zapote Rd. (Muntinlupa)	15.88	20.80	20.20	
Caltex	Zapote, Pamplona	15.85	20.74	20.18	
Jetti	M. Alvarez, Talon	15.86	20.68	20.13	
Petron	Pamplona	15.85	20.67	20.10	21.15
Petron	Real St., Zapote	16.00	20.80	20.24	
Shell	Pacific, Alabang (Muntinlupa)	16.00	20.80	20.24	21.25
Shell	Zapote Pamplona	15.90	20.75	20.19	21.15
Shell	Padre Diego Cera	15.99	20.80	20.24	21.15
Shell	Zapote Pamplona	16.00	20.75	20.19	21.15
Shell	Almanza	16.00	20.80	20.24	21.25
Sampaloc, Manila					
Caltex	Lealtad/Dos Castillas	15.74	20.65	19.90	
Caltex	Dimasalang/Blumentrit	15.90	20.78	20.13	
Caltex	Dapitan/Navarra	15.89	20.78	20.14	
Caltex	Andalucia/Laong Laan	15.90	20.78	20.13	
Diesel Station	G. Tuazon	15.75			
Seaoil	Forbes	15.70	20.65	19.90	
Shell	M. dela Fuente/Laong Laan	15.90	20.75	20.15	21.15
Sta. Mesa, Manila					
Caltex	Old Sta. Mesa/Valenzuela Sts.	15.64	20.15	19.85	
Cityoil	Old Sta. Mesa	15.75	20.70	20.05	
Petron	B. Mapa, Bacood	15.14	20.79	19.14	21.09
Pinoy	R. Magsaysay/Altura	15.15	19.55		
Seaoil	Santol, Sa. Mesa	15.85	20.65	20.48	
Shell	R. Magsaysay	15.35	20.75	20.19	21.15
Greenhills, San Juan					
Caltex-right	Connecticut Greenhills	15.89	20.84	20.17	
Caltex-Edsa	Ortigas/Mckinley Greenhills	15.88	20.75	20.15	
Petron	Ortigas Ave./Santolan Ortigas/Connecticut	15.90	20.86	20.31	21.29
Shell-left	Grenhills	15.90	20.77	20.20	21.15
P. Guevarra St., San Juan					
Flying V	Santolan Road	15.80	20.65	19.90	
Petron	P. Guevarra/P. Parada	15.85	20.79	20.13	21.20
Petron	P. Guevarra/V. Cruz	15.85	20.79	20.13	21.20
Seaoil	Santolan Road	15.75	20.65	19.85	
Along Ortigas Avenue Extension					
Caltex	Ortigas Avenue Extension	15.90	20.79	20.16	
Flying V	Barangay San Isidro	15.88	20.76	20.13	
Petron-left	Ortigas Avenue Extension	15.90	20.79	20.16	
Petron-right	Ortigas Avenue Extension	15.90	20.79	20.16	21.27
Seaoil	Mario Drive	15.87	20.76	20.13	
Pasig Shaw Blvd.					
Caltex-right	Shaw Blvd., Orambo	15.90	20.79	20.13	
Caltex-left	Shaw Blvd./Pioneer	15.90	20.75	20.13	
Petron-left	Pasig Blvd.	15.90	20.76	20.13	21.27
Petron-left	Shaw Blvd., Kapitolyo	15.90	20.76	20.13	21.20
Seaoil	Pasig Blvd.	15.90	20.76	20.13	
Shell-left	Shaw Blvd., Kapitolyo	15.90	20.75	20.13	21.19
Shell-right	Pasig Blvd.	15.90	20.76	20.19	21.15
Boni Ave., Mandaluyong					
Caltex	EDSA	15.90	20.84	20.27	
Petron	Boni Ave./Maysilo	15.88	20.74	20.15	21.15
Shell	Boni Ave./P. Cruz St.	15.90	20.74	20.17	21.15
Unioil	Boni Ave./P. Cruz St.	15.65	20.45	19.95	
Shaw blvd.					
Flying V-right	Shaw Blvd.	15.75	20.75	19.79	
Petron-left	Shaw Blvd.	15.85	20.79	20.13	21.20
Shell-left	Shaw Blvd.	15.14	20.79	19.14	21.15
Shell-left	Shaw Blvd.	15.14	20.75	19.14	21.15
Total-left	Shaw Blvd.	15.69	21.25	19.89	
Uno Fuel	Shaw Blvd.	15.65		19.75	
Kamagong St., Makati City					
Caltex	Kamagong/Sampaloc Sts.	15.92	20.79	20.19	
Petron	Kamagong Street	15.85	20.79	20.13	
Shell	Vito Cruz/Eureka Sts.	16.00	20.80	20.24	21.15
Total	Kamagong Sts.	16.00	20.75	20.15	
Makati Business District					
Caltex	EDSA/Estrella	15.99	21.03	20.63	
Petron	Buendia, Makati Ave.	15.95	20.79	20.23	21.25
Shell	Buendia/Geronimo Sts.	16.00	20.80	20.24	21.15
Shell	Buendia, EDSA	16.00	20.80	20.24	21.15
Pasong Tamo, Makati City					
Caltex	Pasay Rd., Amorsolo St.	15.99	21.15	20.65	
Petron	Buendia, Pasong Tamo	15.96	20.79	20.23	
Shell	Vito Cruz	16.00	20.80	20.24	21.15

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Itinerary

February 2003

February 20	Arrival at the NAIA
February 21 to 28	Archdiocese of Manila 21: Manila Cathedral Edsa Shrine 21 to 22: Binondo Church 22 to 23: Sto. Domingo Church 23 to 24: Our Lady of Guadalupe (Makati) 24 to 25: Immaculate Concepcion (Pasig) 25 to 26: Edsa Shrine 26 to 27: Our Lady of Grace (Kalookan) 27 to 28: Center for Peace (Mandaluyong)
February 28 to March 2	Archdiocese of Jaro (Iloilo)

March 2003

2 to 4	Archdiocese of Palo (Leyte)
5 to 7	Archdiocese of Cotabato
7 to 9	Archdiocese of Lipa
9 to 11	Diocese of Malolos
11 to 13	Archdiocese of San Fernando (Pampanga)
13 to 16	Diocese of Iba (15 to 16: Carmel of the Holy Spirit)
16 to 17	Diocese of San Jose (Nueva Ecija)
17 to 18	Diocese of Urdaneta
18 to 19	Diocese of Alaminos (Carmelite Monastery of the Immaculate Heart-Burgos)
19 to 20	Diocese of Laoag (Carmel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus)
20 to 22	Apostolic Vicariate of Tabuk (Kalinga)
22 to 23	Apostolic Vicariate of Baguio (Carmel of the Most Holy Trinity-Benguet)
23 to 27	Diocese of Tarlac (24 to 25: Master Carmeli – Sta. Ignacia) (26 evening: Despedida procession) (27 noon: Despedida Mass)

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Agile can't be banned –Drilon

SENATE President Franklin Drilon yesterday said that agents of the Accelerating Growth, Investment and Liberalization with Equity (Agile), an alleged United States-funded lobby group, cannot be banned from Senate premises as requested by Sen. Manny Villar.

Drilon said that the Senate works through committees. And as such, each committee has its prerogative who to invite and who not to invite.

Drilon stressed that the Senate has not hired Agile or consulted its agents.

The presence of Agile in almost all layers of the executive branch as confirmed by Michael Yates, mission director of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), in his letter to Drilon who read a portion of it during the "Question Hour" by the Senate committee of the whole the other day.

In his letter, Yates explained that Agile was neither a non governmental agency nor a lobby group but a project by a steering committee composed of the Department of Finance, the National Economic Development Authority and the USAID created in 1997.

He said the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the US government and the Philippines which was signed in 1951 stated that any matter relating to the operations carried out pursuant to the assistance agreement should be raised in consultations between the two governments.

This agreement was ratified by the Senate during the Quirino administration.

Villar earlier questioned the propriety of consulting with foreign consultants on some pieces of legislation when there are competent Filipino consultants and professionals.

Villar urged the Senate leadership to ban Agile from the Senate premises, saying its activities were undermining the independence of Congress as it dictates the workings of legislators.

LTO draws most texted complaints

THE LAND Transportation Office has emerged as the most complained about government agency, based on the text messages received by the Civil Service Commission under its TEXTCSC project.

Also, the most common complaint involved the use of government vehicles for private purposes, the CSC said.

The LTO topped a list of 86 national government agencies with the most texted complaints from April to December 2002.

Following LTO list are the Department of Education and the Philippine National Police.

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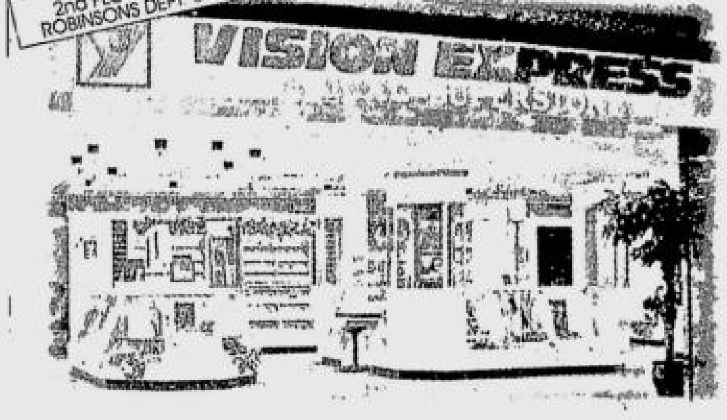

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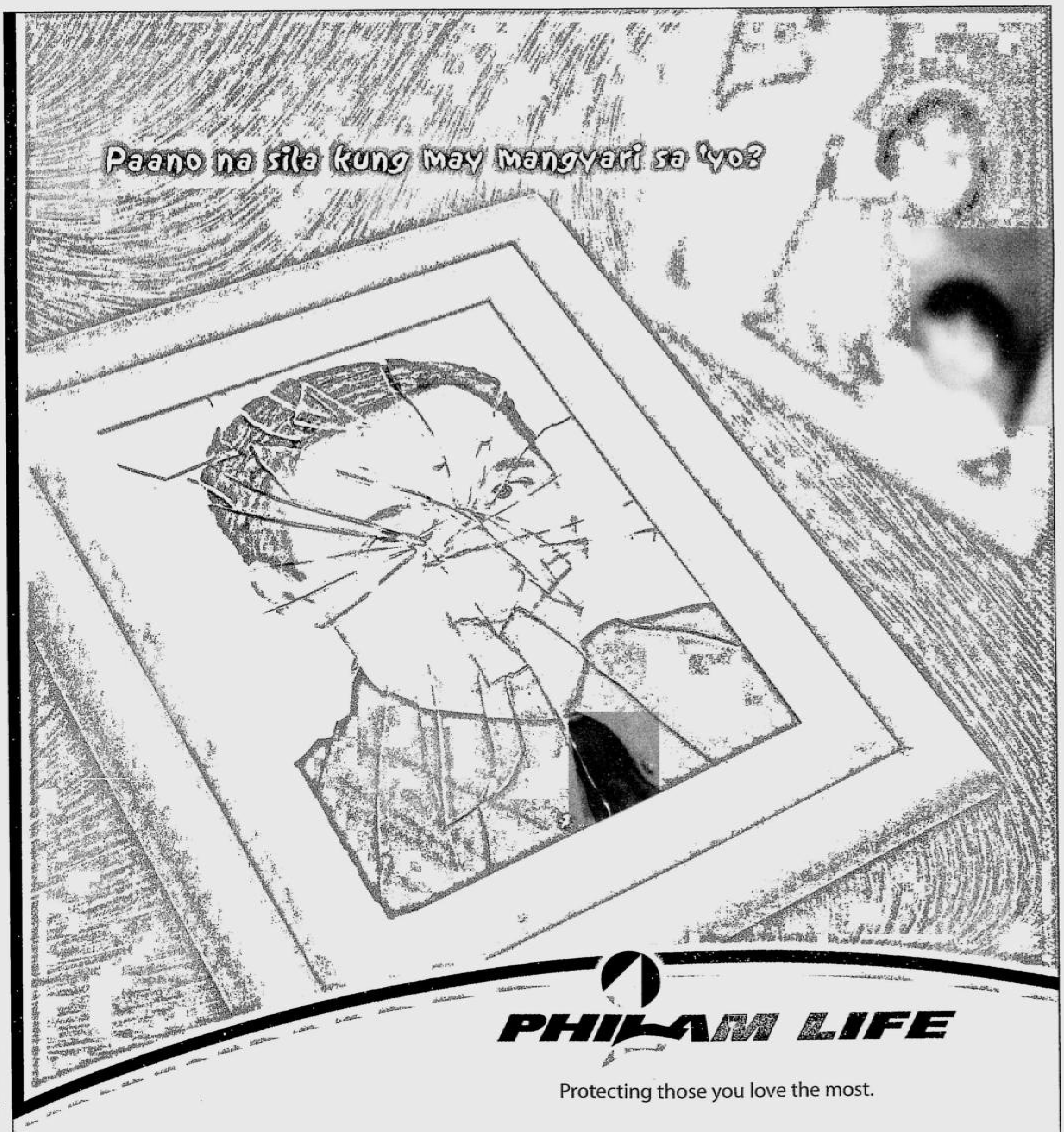

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

302 killed in Iran's worst air crash

TEHRAN—Iran enlisted experienced mountain climbers on Thursday to scour snow-capped peaks for the remains of 302 elite troops and aircrew killed in the country's worst ever air disaster, official media said.

The crash, which also had one of the highest death tolls in world aviation history, occurred on Wednesday evening when a Russian-built aircraft operated by Iran's Revolutionary Guards smashed into a mountainside in southeastern Iran.

No official explanation or hypothesis has been put forward for the crash which killed 302 Revolutionary Guards, including 18 crew.

Officials said bad weather may have been a factor. The pilot of the plane complained of strong winds shortly before contact with the aircraft was lost, they said.

State television said teams of mountain climbers had joined Red Crescent workers to tackle the difficult terrain where the crash occurred in the Siraj mountains close to the city of Kerman, 1,075 km southeast of Tehran.

The official news agency Irna said several bodies had been recovered overnight.

"We are hopeful that in the morning, with clear weather and the overflights of helicopters, the attempts of rescuers to identify and transfer the bodies of the victims will be faster," Mohammad Ali Karimi, governor of Kerman province, told Irna.

A senior source close to the government said some high-ranking military officials were among the fatalities in Wednesday's crash.

Formed shortly after the 1979 Islamic revolution inspired by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Revolutionary Guards force is independent of Iran's regular army and played a key role in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Today it numbers about 120,000 personnel and answers directly to Khomeini's successor, current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Officials refused to comment on why so many military personnel were traveling together.

The death toll exceeded that of a 1988 disaster, when an Iran Air A-300 Airbus was shot down over the Gulf by the US warship Vincennes which wrongly identified it as an attacking fighter. All 290 people on board were killed in that incident.

State media said the Russian-built Ilyushin aircraft took off from Zahedan, near Iran's border with Pakistan.

About one hour into the flight the pilot told air traffic controllers he wanted to land in Kerman, which is normally 45 minutes flying time from Zahedan.

"In his last radio contact, the pilot said 'I am trying to approach the airport; maybe the weather conditions will get better.' At that moment, the contact was lost," Karimi said. *Reuters*

A COUPLE cry in front of portraits of some of the victims in the Feb. 18 arson attack on a Daegu underground train during a funeral for some of the victims in Daegu, Feb. 20. AFP

Relatives of subway blaze victims furious over identification delays

DAEGU, South Korea—Angry relatives of victims ambushed president-elect Roh Moo-hyun Thursday as he visited the South Korean city of Daegu where 125 people died in a subway station inferno.

Roh, 56, who takes office on Tuesday, has already announced he would scale down his inauguration celebrations, scrapping several official appointments in order to tour the disaster area and console bereaved families.

After visiting the central subway station where two trains were gutted on Tuesday, Roh toured hospitals and spoke to the injured.

He then paid his respects at a makeshift altar to the dead set up in a government building turned into a temporary emergency headquarters and reception center for victims families.

As Roh attempted to leave the room where the altar had been erected, four women and a man blocked the door and refused to let him pass for several minutes before the stunned security officials and police escorted them away.

"I have no body, please find it for me," screamed one woman in her 50s at Roh, who appeared surprised and did not respond as other family members joined the shouting match and tugged at his clothes.

Only a few dozen of the victims have been identified and forensic scientists say they will need DNA testing to identify many others who were burned beyond recognition, a process that could take months, rather than weeks.

On Wednesday, some 200 relatives searching for clues about their lost loved-ones scuffled with police and city officials. Prime Minister Kim Suk-Soo was mobbed by an unruly crowd during a visit on the same day.

President Kim Dae-jung declared South Korea's fourth largest city some 200 km southeast of Seoul a disaster area, promising financial aid and Roh said he would see to it that the support was forthcoming.

"I express deep condolences over your pain and suffering," Roh said after a 30-minute meeting with a delegation of bereaved relatives. "The government will give as much support as possible to ease your pain."

Roh also addressed reports that more lives were lost in the disaster because of a lack of fire precautions and safety measures as well as other human errors. *AFP*

UN: Human trafficking in Asia history's 'biggest slave trade'

TOKYO—Some 30 million women and children across the Asia-Pacific region have been trafficked over the past 30 years, victims of "the largest slave trade in history," a United Nations official told a conference here Thursday.

"Think of the scale of the problem: 1.2 million children are trafficked each year, although the actual figure might be higher than that," Kul Gautum, deputy executive director of the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), told a two-day International Symposium on Trafficking of Children.

The victims, often teenage girls, often end up working in sweat shops or as prostitutes, Gautum said.

Southeast Asia alone has the worst record of human trafficking in the world, according to the official.

"The number of women and children trafficked in the Asia-Pacific region... according to one estimate, (reached) 30 million people over the last three decades.

"We are speaking about the largest slave trade in the history. That's what the trafficking is," he said.

About 100 representatives from NGOs and official diplomatic observers attended the forum, sponsored by Unicef and the Japanese foreign ministry.

Organized as a follow-up to the second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in December 2001 in Yokohama, south of Tokyo, the symposium enabled NGOs to introduce their activities and exchange information.

In the region, efforts to stop human trafficking are often hurt by corrupt government officials, Gautum noted. *AFP*

Risk from chem'l arms, dirty bomb seen minimal

LONDON—Chemical, biological and radiological weapons (CBR) pose only a minimal risk of causing widespread deaths and are of little interest to al-Qaida, a British counter-terrorism expert said on Wednesday.

Instead militant groups such as Osama bin Laden's network, blamed for the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States, would continue to use bombs or easily accessible "weapons" like planes or petrol tankers as weapons of mass destruction.

"CBR weapons have received only desultory attention from old terrorist organisations and almost none from new. Al-Qaida have shown no interest," Brig. Malcolm Mackenzie-Orr said. "Why change their favoured method of attack?"

The United States and Britain are massing troops in the Gulf in preparation for a possible invasion of Iraq to disarm Baghdad of weapons of mass destruction which they say could be used in the future by terror organisations.

Last week the US government warned that al-Qaida could be planning a possible mass-casualty CBR attack, and raised the national threat level to orange, the second-highest after red.

But Mackenzie-Orr accused governments of playing up the risk of CBRs for political reasons, saying they had proved generally nowhere near as effective as traditional weapons in the past.

He said chemical weapons were quickly dispersed, biological weapons were difficult to spread widely, and radiological weapons—so-called "dirty bombs"—presented big logistical problems.

Mackenzie-Orr, who served as a former bomb disposal chief in Northern Ireland and worked at Britain's Porton Down chemical and biological weapons testing site, was also the former head of the Australian National Counter-Terrorism and Protective Security Organisation. *Reuters*

WATERS OF MARS

This Nasa image released Feb. 19 taken by Thermal Emission Imaging System on board the Mars Odyssey spacecraft, indicates that gullies on martian crater walls may have been carved by liquid water melting from remnant snow packs. AFP

TECHNO LEAP

A girl in traditional Tibetan dress checks messages on her cellphone, Feb. 20 on the outskirts of Xining, in western China's Qinghai province. China's largest mobile phone operator said it had a total of 119.78 million subscribers at the end of January. AFP

China farmer kills 13 in land row

BEIJING—A farmer in northeast China has stabbed and bludgeoned to death 13 people from his village—including a family of eight—following a dispute over land, state media said Thursday.

The suspect, identified as Guo Zhongmin, is accused of carrying out the killing spree on Tuesday afternoon in Yetun village, near Huludao city in Liaoning province, the Liaoshen Evening News said.

He was taking revenge against three men with whom he had arguments over property that housed vegetable greenhouses, the report said.

Guo went to the homes of each of the men and killed them and family members with knives, a club and a hammer.

In the first home, he killed one of the men and seven of his family members—the man's wife, two daughters, grandson, granddaughter, nephew and his nephew's wife. *AFP*

US high court asked to curb gov't spying

WASHINGTON—The age-old battle between civil liberties and national security has reached the US Supreme Court, after a coalition of civic groups asked the justices to rule on the constitutionality of the government's new domestic spying powers.

An appeal filed Wednesday with the court by the American Civil Liberties Union (Aclu) and several other organizations targets the USA Patriot Act adopted by Congress in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001.

The statute allows the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other law enforcement agencies to rely on looser legal standards, normally used in counterintelligence operations, to conduct surveillance in criminal investigations in the United States.

"On behalf of all Americans, we are urging the Supreme Court to reject the extreme notion that Attorney General (John) Ashcroft can suspend the ordinary requirements of the Fourth Amendment to listen in on phone calls, read e-mails, and conduct secret searches of Americans' homes and offices," said Ann Beeson, Associate Legal Director of the Aclu.

The case offers the Supreme Court its first opportunity to weigh in on a sea change in legal standards and practices that have occurred in the United States since the terrorist attacks that claimed about 3,000 lives.

The militant Islamic al-Qaida network led by Saudi-born Osama bin Laden has been blamed for the strikes, in which hijacked passenger jets were used to ram the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon building outside Washington.

Since then, members of US-based Muslim groups have complained they have been placed under illegal surveillance, their mosques and other gathering place are being monitored by the FBI and they are submitted to questionable searches and detentions.

The US government's new surveillance powers were dealt a heavy blow last May when a secret court that sits inside the Justice Department rejected them, citing serious abuses, including errors in approximately 75 applications for foreign surveillance. *AFP*

America's prestige takes a beating worldwide

By John Leicester

PARIS—The years have not dimmed Bernadette Mouchel's respect for Americans. Nothing, the French retiree says, could erase her gratitude to the brave GIs—"those boys who died," she calls them—who liberated her Normandy farm from Nazi occupiers in World War II.

Which is why, 59 years later, the prospect of renewed war over Iraq leaves Mouchel deeply conflicted. Like others the world over, her attitude toward Washington is hardening. Despite her feelings for Americans, she can't help but voice—almost apologetically—concern that the United States is a superpower running amok.

"Business America, economic America, is just too powerful and it wants—I don't necessarily want to say rule the world, that might be too strong—but it wants nevertheless to keep an eye on the entire world's affairs," said Mouchel, age 75.

In many corners of the globe, America's image is slipping. While the current crisis is over Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the United States is on trial in the court of world public opinion for pushing efforts to disarm President Saddam Hussein by military force, rather than through slower but peaceful UN inspections.

Interviews by Associated Press reporters with dozens of ordinary people in nations as far-flung as France and China, Algeria and South Korea, suggest that goodwill and sympathy for the United States generated by the Sept. 11 terror attacks have evaporated.

For some, the United States is again—or always has been—the country they love to hate: America the brutal, America the hypocrite, America the implacable ideological or religious foe.

"We pray for America's destruction day and night," says Haider Khan, who drives a taxi in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad.

But beyond the zealots and outside the Muslim world, many others are torn between admiration for Americans and things American—they cite democracy, technology, Hollywood movies—and the discomforting reality of America the sole superpower, able and willing to fight alone if need be, despite international opposition. *AP*

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Ma-a Road, Davao City
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Gun ban exemption sought for rebels

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The government peace panel negotiating with breakaway rebels is seeking the exemption of 100 members of the rebel group from a directive prohibiting civilians from carrying firearms outside their residence.

Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles, chair of the Joint Enforcement and Monitoring Committee (JEMC), said they recommended to President Macapagal-Arroyo the exemption of 100 members of the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa-Pilipinas-Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPMP-RPA-ABB) from the President's directive banning the carrying of firearms outside their homes.

Deles, also the lead convenor of the National Anti-Poverty Council, said the recommendation was a result of consultations with various government agencies.

Deles made the statement during a press conference on Tuesday after the third regular meeting of the JEMC at the Hotel del Rio in Iloilo City.

The five-member committee monitors and oversees the enforcement of the provisions of the peace agreement.

During the 12th anniversary celebration of the Philippine National Police on Jan. 20, President Macapagal ordered the PNP to suspend indefinitely the special permits that allowed civilians to carry firearms outside their residences to curb criminality and the proliferation of loose firearms.

Only uniformed members of the military and the PNP can carry firearms in public places.

Deles said they sought the exemption from the gun ban for the peace agreement "to take its course."

She said it would take another round of talks with the RPMP-RPA-ABB if the ban would be applied to the provisions of the peace pact.

Deles said the exemption is also necessary because the government panel "recognizes . . . that there are grave threats" (against the breakaway rebel group) after the killing of Romulo Kintanar by the New People's Army.

The guidelines on the cessation of hostilities also contain enough safeguards against the possible abuse of firearms by RPMP-RPA-ABB members, she added.

RPA-ABB national commander Stephen Paduano, also known as Carapali Lualhati, said special permits to carry firearms would be given to 100 members of his group who have passed the screening of the PNP Directorate for Intelligence.

Deles also announced that the JEMC has signed the specific guidelines of the peace agreement paving the way for the implementation of provisions.

The representative of the two panels approved the guidelines covering four areas: cessation of hostilities; issuance of special licenses to carry firearms; management and utilization of the P10 million in reintegration fund; implementation of the P500 million in development projects and release of alleged political prisoners.

NGO endorses whale watching

ILAGAN, Isabela—An official of a national environmental group is pushing the establishment of whale watching in the coastal towns of Isabela to attract tourists and generate employment for local folk.

Jose Ma. Lorenzo Tan, president of the World Wide Fund for Nature Philippines (WWFP)-Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas, said the humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) seen in the waters of eastern Isabela can attract ecotourism ventures in the coastal towns of Palanan, Maconacon, Dinapigue and Divilacan.

"Involving the community for the ecotourism venture on whale watching operation means they should gain from it without exploiting it. If people will not support nongovernment and government protection efforts to save these marine mammals, we will soon lose them," Tan said.

He said investors should be tapped to sustain the whale watching and conservation activities.

In 1999, a WWFP research team discovered the presence of humpback whales at the Babuyan Channel in nearby Cagayan.

Information gathered from the Internet said humpback whales are found virtually worldwide. They are seasonally migrating from polar feeding grounds to tropical breeding grounds. Estimated at 10,000 worldwide, humpback whales are considered an endangered species. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Rice import mess tied to dirty money

LEADERS of various farmers' organizations yesterday asked President Macapagal to investigate what the groups said was the possibility that the President's Farmers as Importers of Rice Program (FIRP) is being used for money laundering.

In a statement, the National Confederation of Irrigators Association (NCIA), a group that claims to have 820,000 farmer-members, said the President should ask the National Food Authority (NFA) to explain why letters of credit to import were issued to farmers' groups that are backed by big rice traders and are bogus.

The NCIA said the Modern Farmers Multi-purpose Cooperative Inc. (MFMCI) and the Sto. Niño Farmers' Cooperative obtained letters of credit to import huge volumes of rice despite the fact that the MFMCI is a company that supplies farm equipment and was formed six months ago while the Sto. Niño has been inactive for 10 years now.

The NCIA said it checked the backgrounds of these two groups and found that they were formed with the help of big rice traders.

The NCIA earlier presented documents showing that more than $4 million were sent to bogus farmers' groups using the rice importation program as cover.

GMA pays tribute to Pampanga trader

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday paid tribute to Pampanga businessman Jesus Lazatin who, along with several Kapampangan businessmen, established and managed the Pampanga Sugar Development Co. (Pasudeco) and the San Fernando Electric Light and Power Co. (Sfelapco).

The President's tribute came a day ahead of Lazatin's burial today (Feb. 21) at the family mausoleum at the old Catholic cemetery in the City of San Fernando.

Lazatin died on Monday night of lung cancer. He was 80.

The seventh child of sugar hacendero Don Serafin Lazatin and landed scion Encarnacion Singian, Lazatin completed his high school at the De La Salle in Manila, business law in Ateneo de Manila and master's degree in business administration at the New York University.

Lazatin, together with the De Leon and Escaler families, helped revive the Pasudeco, one of the country's biggest sugar mills, from the ruins of the war and later from the sugar crisis.

The President's father, Diosdado Macapagal, was a staunch supporter of the Pasudeco when he was a congressman, vice president and President.

As a general manager, Lazatin rehabilitated Sfelapco, the first electric company in Pampanga, from its war-ravaged conditions. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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Rebs raid outpost, seize weapons

BUTUAN CITY—Communist rebels raided an Army outpost in Barangay Zamora, Talacogon, Agusan del Sur on Sunday, and took off with 10 high-powered firearms.

Col. Francisco Simbajon, chief of the civil affairs unit of the 4th Infantry Division, said the seven militiamen manning the detachment of the 36th Infantry Battalion were caught by surprise and failed to fight back.

"There was no resistance because they were surprised," Simbajon told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

The raid came several days after the communist-led National Democratic Front-Mindanao Commission warned that it would carry out "sympathy offensives" in support of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's battle with government troopers in Central Mindanao.

"This might be their act of sympathy with the MILF," Simbajon said.

But Col. Ramon Espiritu, provincial police chief, told a radio station here that the paramilitary group did not heed their warning to be on full alert following the reported presence of the rebels.

Hours before the attack came, Espiritu said, the police had already received information about possible New People's Army harassment and attacks.

"We already informed them of the intelligence report but they did not care," Espiritu said.

Chief Supt. Alberto Olario, police chief of the Caraga Region, said their military counterparts should learn from the attack and never let their guards down amid a resurgence of the insurgency threat.

"This serves as a lesson, we should always be on alert," Olario said.

Simbajon warned that the unit has lot of explaining to do as it could be held responsible for the loss of the firearms. *Franklin A. Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Solon's sis killed in road crash

TAFT, Eastern Samar—The elder sister of Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino C. Libanan was killed in a motorcycle accident last week along the highway in Barangay Polangi, 2 km from here.

Police said Marissa C. Libanan-Daya died of severe head injuries.

Marissa was riding with her husband, Ireneo, on a red Honda 125 motorcycle on their way home from Barangay Manting.

Ireneo tried to avoid a stray dog that suddenly crossed the highway, leading to a fatal crash.

Ireneo was unharmed but Marissa had to be rushed to the Taft District Hospital. In coma, Marissa was transferred to the Borongan Doctor's Hospital, where she died three hours later.

Local folk fondly call Marissa "Mana Maris."

"She was widely respected as a prudent and honest businesswoman," said a resident. *Marc Villavicencio, PDI Visayas Bureau*

US may junk plan …

From page A1

than $30 billion, according to US sources.

Wrangling over the size of Washington's multibillion-dollar aid package for Ankara prompted the Turkish government to defer a decision on whether to allow the deployment of US invasion troops on its territory.

"A framework for the agreement we are looking for has not been established," a spokesperson said after a meeting of Turkey's Cabinet. "No decision regarding the request (to parliament on admitting troops) has been made."

The United States, however, warned its reluctant ally to act fast. "Time is a critical issue for us," US Ambassador Robert Pearson told reporters in Ankara.

Showing frustration as the clock ticks toward military action, the United States has made clear it is close to abandoning its plans for a Turkish front.

Even so, the United States and Britain continued to build up their forces in the Gulf region. The two allies are also planning to introduce shortly a new UN resolution that will pave the way for military action and give Saddam Hussein a final few weeks to fully cooperate with weapons inspectors.

US and British officials said Wednesday the short resolution, to be circulated later this week or early next week, would declare Iraq in "material breach" of its UN obligation to completely eliminate its weapons of mass destruction—a determination that could justify the use of military force.

"Turkey, of course, is desirable from a strategic point of view for any military staging, but the military of the United States is sufficiently flexible that whatever decision is made the United States will still be successful in carrying out any military operations," White House spokesperson Ari Fleischer said.

A Nato committee, meeting without France, approved on Wednesday the deployment of Patriot missiles and other defense equipment to Turkey, which fears possible counterattacks from Iraq in the event of war.

The US force in the Gulf region is expected to total well over 200,000 troops. Britain has mobilized some 40,000 troops. *Reports by Reuters and AP*

Top 10 physician examinees listed

THE PROFESSIONAL Regulation Commission announced that 807 out of 1,415 examinees passed the Physicians Licensure Exam given by the Board of Medicine in Manila and Cebu this month.

Top 10 examinees were Loubimir Cyrus E. Antonio, 87.08%; Victoria M. Amigo, 85.33; Marian Franz M. Siguenza, 84.00; Sheri Ann S. Liquete, 83.58; Barbara Ann B. Bravo, 83.42; Sarah L. Lontac, 83.33; Nelson U. Logronio, 83.17; Nestor A. Cailo, 83.00; Louella Margot D. Regis, 83.00; Alvin Rey B. Tan, 83.00; Virgilio T. Torculas, 83.00; Rhandy G. Santos, 82.83, and Orestes E. Solis, 82.67.

The complete list of successful examinees may be accessed at www.inq7.net.

Registration for professional identification cards will be from Feb. 27 to March 7, 2003. Registrants must bring their latest community tax certificate, 2 passport-size photos (colored with white background and name tag), one 1 ½" x 1 ½" photo, metered documentary stamps worth P45 and one long clear envelope. They are also required to pay the initial and annual registration fees of P400 and P300, respectively, for 2003-2006.

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14 killed in Zambo massacre

From page A1

"Well, this is to justify more attacks against our positions. But as I have said before, our fighters have orders not to harm civilians. It is not the policy of the MILF to hurt people who are not armed," Kabalu said.

In Camp Aguinaldo, an Armed Forces official who requested anonymity said two suspects identified by one of the survivors had been arrested yesterday afternoon.

The suspects, identified as Jappal "Casato" Lumanta and Baser Alindang, were residents of this town's Camp Islam Poblacion, which the official described as an MILF-influenced area.

Senior Supt. Marcelino Lipana, provincial police chief, said the armed men descended on Tubod, which is about 3 km from the town center, at about 8:45 p.m.

Mayor Arnold Carloto said the men lined up the victims and then fired on them. The armed men then torched the houses and a village center before fleeing, he added.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya said some of the victims died when their houses were set on fire. "The lawless elements trapped some residents and burned five houses and a purok center," Abaya said.

As of press time, three people remain missing, he said.

Grenade launchers

The armed men unloaded their M-60 machine guns and grenade launchers on the villagers' homes, setting them on fire.

Policemen and soldiers brought the victims to the Ipil District Hospital for treatment.

Abaya said he suspected that the armed men were the same group that attacked and killed several personnel of the Canadian-owned mining firm Toronto Ventures Inc. in nearby Siocon town late last year.

"We have reports that it was the same group involved in the TVI attack," he said. The military blamed the MILF for that attack.

"I have already dispatched one team of Cafgu under the 40th Infantry Battalion and several troops from the 103rd Infantry Brigade to proceed to the scene to assist the police in their pursuit operations," he said.

Another AFP official who spoke on condition of anonymity said military intelligence had reported the sighting of troops of the MILF's 4th Battalion from its 403rd Brigade in the area before the massacre. The unit, the same source said, was headed by Commander Tarasa Salaam of the Bangsa Moro Islamic Armed Forces' 4th Division.

But Kabalu said other groups, including those identified with politicians, may have perpetrated the massacre.

In a statement, Lanao del Sur Rep. Faysah Dumarpa said she and other Islamic leaders in Mindanao were one in condemning the "barbarism demonstrated by the still unknown armed groups." *With reports from Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau; TJ Burgonio; AP*

Death came knocking at 8:45 p.m.

From page A1

was.

In between knocks, a man identified himself as a soldier. "He told me to open up the door because they were from the military," she said in the vernacular.

Bebing said she did not have second thoughts because, like her neighbors, she was used to visiting soldiers and, occasionally, even visiting rebels.

"The voice told me that the military was meeting the people of our purok (village) at the purok center. They said they had important things to tell us," a teary-eyed Bebing recalled yesterday.

Carrying her baby, Bebing walked behind the armed men to the center, about five meters away, with her two other children, Bername, 10, and Albert, 18. There they saw at least 20 of their neighbors and their children, plus about 20 men in fatigues.

Bebing said she and the others were then ordered to line up. "I then began to think. But before I could figure out what was going on, the armed men started to fire on us," she said.

Bebing said she felt a sudden pain and fell to the ground. Others had been hit too.

"They were crying in pain. Children were crying in terror but the burst of the guns was deafening. I screamed but there was no stopping them from shooting us," she said. Bebing saw other neighbors falling to the ground as the bullets ripped through their bodies.

Bebing said she tried to shield her children, but when the smoke cleared, Benz, Bername and Albert were lying dead, along with eleven other people.

The close-knit village populated by Subanen and Cebuano families had suddenly turned into a bloody graveyard for helpless women, the elderly and the children.

Elizabeth Acolbe, 44, said she was at her farmhouse when she heard the burst of gunfire.

"I saw a huge fire. I was terrified. I thought of my children so I ran and ran," Elizabeth said.

When she arrived at the village, she saw the bodies strewn around the village center. Some of them were still moving, she recalled.

Elizabeth said she started calling out the names of her husband and their children.

To her horror, her children Rufino Jr., 22, Roldan, 11, and Marygrace, 8, were already dead. Her husband Rufino was wounded.

Merlinda Felisilda, 36, said it took several minutes for police and town officials to arrive.

"I could not avoid asking why we have to suffer from this kind of terror. We are living peacefully, tending our farms and raising our children. What have we done to deserve this?" she asked.

2 bombs hit C. Mindanao towns; 2 dead, 19 hurt

From page A1

Maguindanao. The blast killed a 22-year-old waitress, injured at least 10 other persons and started a fire that gutted six restaurants and 10 residential houses. It also destroyed the airport terminal building, which housed the Philippine Airlines ticketing office.

PAL said it would indefinitely suspend its daily service between Manila and Cotabato beginning today.

There were reports that a soldier also died in Awang, but military officials could not confirm it.

Authorities said the bomb was placed inside an L-300 van parked in front of Pampagueña Eatery, about 100 meters from the airport and 150 meters from the headquarters of the 6th Infantry Division.

The blast knocked out phone services and sparked a power outage in the area.

Marissa Letan, owner of Pampangueña restaurant, recalled: "The car was suspiciously roaming around the airport's car park, moving slowly until it parked in front of our restaurant . . . Shortly after, the driver disembarked and a powerful explosion followed."

The blast crater was three feet deep and about three meters in diameter. Two other parked vehicles were also destroyed.

Suicide bomber?

Officials said the 17-year-old suspect in the Kabacan explosion could have been a suicide bomber sent by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Insp. Abelio Jungaya, Kabacan police chief, said Makalogi was a resident of Simuay in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. Jungaya said some witnesses identified the teener as the one carrying a bulky package covered by a black jacket.

"He looked really nervous," 64-year-old Lolita Adrias, one of the victims, later told the INQUIRER.

Jungaya said the police were also looking for a second suspect, who was apparently wounded in the explosion. "He was with the suspect. He later pretended to be a customer and sorted out some clothes," he said.

"God really works in mysterious ways. You want to bomb many people but you get yourself killed too," North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Piñol said.

Piñol said only the MILF was capable of staging such an attack. "It's their signature," he said.

But the MILF denied it was behind the explosion here.

"This is not our type. The attack is brought (on) by local problems," Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said.

He said the long-standing dispute between former Mayor Wilfredo Bataga and Mayor Luz Tan was the angle the police should look into.

"Why blame us? It's related to the Wilfredo Bataga and Luz Tan mayoralty conflict," Kabalu said.

At the Department of National Defense, Secretary Angelo Reyes refused to pin the blame on the MILF, saying that he still has to verify the information.

But the spokesperson of the 6th Infantry Division, which recovered the MILF-held Buliok complex last week, did not quibble.

"Residents identified the slain suspect as a MILF member," Maj. Julieto Ando said, adding that the explosive device was a mortar shell wired to a timing device.

"The bomber was killed. It was a premature explosion while he was trying to plant the device in the market," Ando told Reuters by telephone.

Reports reaching Camp Aguinaldo said that the bomb was brought to the Spectrum Building, an appliance store, around 9:30 a.m. yesterday.

Empty airport

The Awang airport terminal was empty of passengers at the time the car bomb went off.. Awang is about 7 km from Cotabato City, the regional center.

The bomb was placed inside a van parked in front of the airport, said Brig. Gen. Trifonio Salazar, deputy division commander. The last plane left the airport two hours before the 2:35 p.m. explosion, Salazar added.

"There was a red van which was going slowly around the area, then it parked in front of the Pampangueña restaurant," said one witness, who refused to identify herself. The van was left there and the explosion occurred minutes later, she said.

The slain waitress was identified as Neneng Bello.

Shirley Eston, 35, who manages a restaurant adjacent to Pampagueña, said "it was a very powerful explosion. I thought the whole compound exploded. I immediately dropped to seek cover."

The fire was controlled 15 minutes after.

Maj. Gen. Generoso Senga, 6th ID chief who was in Pikit, North Cotabato, flew back to his headquarters and inspected the blast scene.

"This is a terroristic act. Very devastating," Senga said.

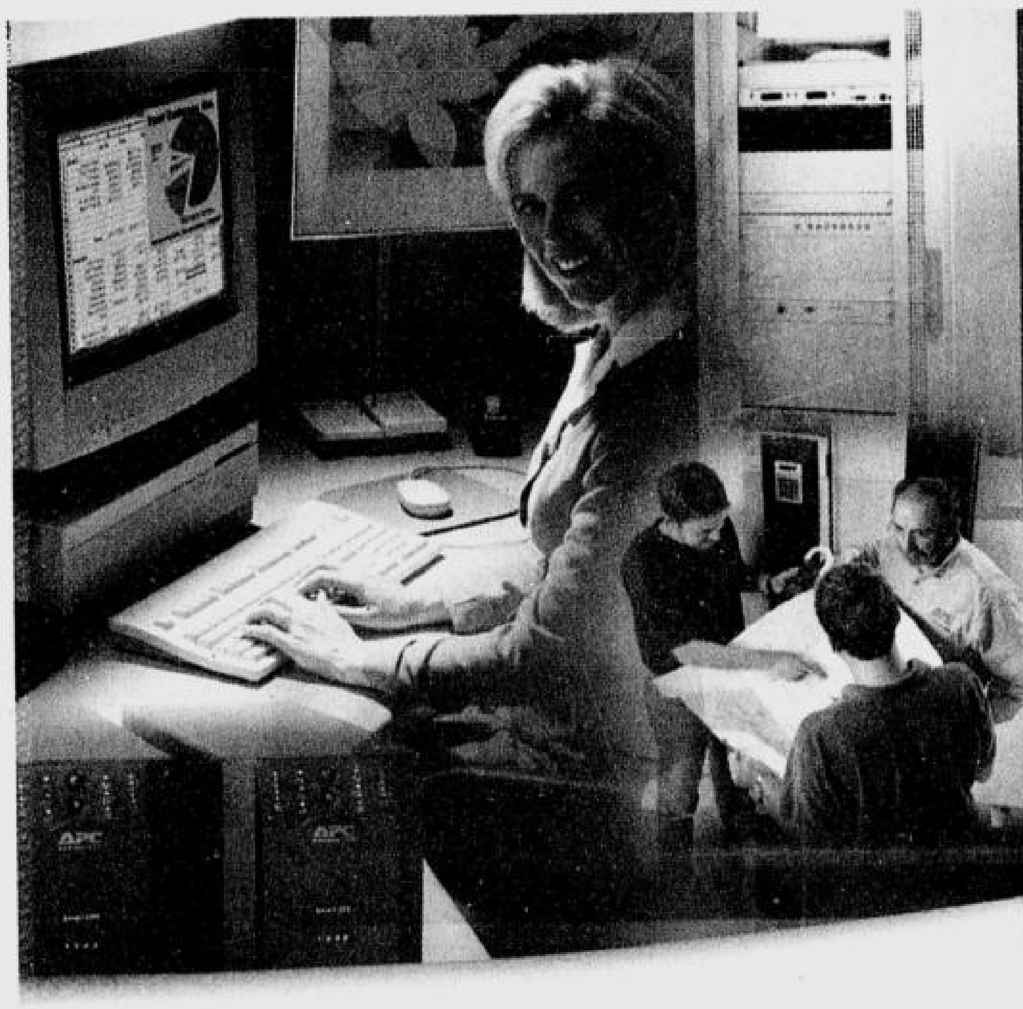
A bomb expert who asked not to be named said an electronic device, most probably a mobile phone, triggered the explosive.

Immediately after the blast, the lone road leading to the airport and the 6th ID headquarters was filled with military personnel and roadblocks as soldiers checked all passing vehicles, while four Simba armored vehicles were parked at the camp entrance. Two attack helicopters were also deployed.

No one claimed responsibility for the bomb although military sources said the MILF was behind it.

But Kabalu denied the MILF was targeting civilians. "This is all military propaganda."

"Our commanders have autonomy to carry out attacks on military targets and not to hit civilians," Kabalu said. *Jeffrey M. Tupas, Charlie C. Senase, Edwin O. Fernandez and Rosa-May V. de Guzman, Edwin O. Fernandez, Joselle R. Badilla; PDI Mindanao Bureau; AFP, AP, Reuters*



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GMA scolds cops . . .

From page A1

other bad guys."

The President told the police officials that while the campaign against big-time crime syndicates had progressed, police response to street crimes "has not been satisfactory."

The crimes include snatching of cell phones and jewelry, picking pockets, fighting among gangs, mugging and selling of illegal drugs. Last year, the PNP received 21,060 reports of street crimes nationwide. Among the regions, Metro Manila had the highest incidence of street crimes at 8,108, followed by Cebu with 5,510. Last month, crime incidents in Metro Manila increased by 22 percent.

The President said the national government could not be faulted for the high incidence of street crimes as it had provided the PNP with enough funds, including higher wages. To help beef up security in the streets, she announced that she was releasing P10 million for the training of barangay tanods or auxiliary policemen in law enforcement.

The President also pointed out that worries about an imminent war in the Middle East and about terrorist attacks were compounding the sense of "individual insecurity."

Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., the PNP chief, had obviously expected the dressing-down.

PNP Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), and Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, PNP chief of operations, presented to the President the PNP battle plan against street crimes.

Crime clock

It included deploying policemen based on a "crime clock," which indicates the time certain crimes usually occur.

"Akyat-Bahay" gangs usually strike between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. when parents are at work and the children are still in school, while cell phone snatchers usually prey on students as they leave school premises for lunch break at 11 a.m. and when they go back for classes between 1:30 p.m. and 2 p.m., according to the PNP.

Car theft usually occurs between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. in dimly lighted areas, usually in Quezon City and Makati, while rape usually occurs between 7 p.m. and 10 a.m., just as women go home from school or work. Murder, homicide and serious injuries usually occur between late afternoon and evening, oftentimes due to brawls among drunken men.

Briefing reporters after the command conference, Ebdane said the President had given the PNP a year to significantly reduce street crimes.

Outside the Palace, police officials disputed reports that they were given a dressing down by the President.

"I don't recall a time that the President admonished the officials. In fact, she commended the PNP chief for the police's successful campaign against kidnapping," Director Ricardo de Leon of the Police Community Relations told reporters.

Best not good enough

"We've not been remiss in our job. We've been doing our job. Perhaps our best wasn't just good enough," he said.

The Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (Pacer) had been credited with curbing kidnapping in the second half of last year after it busted at least six of the 21 kidnap-for-ransom gangs.

De Leon, however, acknowledged that the number of "street crimes" such as theft and robbery in Metro Manila increased this year. He attributed the increase to the high cost of living, urban migration, large number of informal settlers and crime groups.

To address street crimes, Ebdane instructed NCRPO officials to increase visibility in crime-prone areas and to forge a more active coordination with barangay officials, De Leon said.

"The policemen are instructed to spend 50 percent of their time in the streets," he said.

Hello, Joe! Beware, Joe!

From page A1

strains of "Juanita."

They returned 15 years later, no longer in Civil War blues but in fatigues, their duffel bags loaded with Lucky Strikes, Hershey's and Baby Ruth and their pockets full of Chiclets. They were hailed as saviors named "Joe."

And when they left again shortly afterward, it was a bittersweet parting with "I'll Be Seeing You" playing in the background. But, yes, they left behind atabrine tablets, sulfur soap, the boogie-woogie and Glenn Miller.

Since then, the Tausug memory of the Americans has been a mixture of amusement at their strange ways and some love for the good things they did and the stuff they gave. Throw in a grudging admission of their military superiority and anger at their victories over the native warriors in the mountain battles.

But there was very little hate.

Now the Americans will again come to Jolo, to engage in the RP-US Balikatan 03-1 "war games" scheduled to start on Monday, doubtless bearing military hardware never before seen on the island.

With the military authorities' earlier statements that Sulu was out of the war-games geography, the US arrival has generated varying reactions from the Tausug. Yet there is a common denominator: surprise.

Retaliation

A survey through text messaging conducted by dxSM radio for two days running showed heavy opposition to Balikatan 03-1. The responses were so thick with allusions to the past that it seemed Bud Dahu happened only last month.

"Their presence will allow us to retaliate if [US President George W.] Bush attacks Iraq. The Americans have a hidden agenda wherever they go," said a resident.

Interviewed over dxSM, Sulu State College president Dr. Hamsali Jawali recalled how the Americans betrayed the brave Panglima Hassan, a hero in his hometown of Parang.

"[Balikatan 03-1] should not be allowed," Jawali said.

Jolo Mayor Hadji Suod Tan was more circumspect: "If it is for the better, if it will bring about peace, why not?" Yet he expressed surprise at the development that, he said, he learned about only in the newspapers.

But an equal number—many of them residents of outlying towns who fled to Jolo to escape military operations against the Abu Sayyaf bandits—viewed the coming of the US troops as the final solution to the wretchedness of their lives.

"We are tired of running, evacuating, going back, running again. Why don't they want the Americans to come? Why don't they say the same thing about the military? They are the ones who have made our lives miserable," said a mother whose five children have stopped going to school.

But lawyer Nasser Ynawat bewailed the "imposition."

"A decision like this should not just be imposed," Ynawat said. "A thorough consultation with our people should have been done first, for after all we are the ones to be directly affected, whether [for good or ill]."

Councilor Edil Baddiri of Indanan said he had opposed the Balikatan exercises as early as December 2001 in view of "the effects of such a military operation on the civilian population."

"But after seeing the results of the exercise in Basilan . . . now I am inclined to support it," said Baddiri, a lawyer and first-time elective official who represents the association of municipal councilors in the provincial board.

When told that some people called Balikatan 03-1 "a provocation," Baddiri said: "These Americans are professional soldiers. They know the risks. We should instead welcome their help."

Resolutions

The 10 towns comprising Sulu's second district have issued a resolution expressing full support for the military exercise.

The eight other towns of the 1st district, which includes the capital town of Jolo, are preparing a similar resolution.

Rep. Monir Arbison said he would back any government policy or program that would benefit Sulu and its people. "So with the Balikatan," he said.

Arbison, a civil engineer, even offered his hometown of Luuk as venue for the exercise. Luuk, the most developed town outside of Jolo, is ideal because of its large area and a strictly enforced gun ban, he said.

The town of which Arbison's father Hadji Abdurahman is mayor has a good wharf where even naval ships can dock, paved roads, electricity, running water—and white-sand beaches.

And Joe, the water's fine.

12 US Green Berets arrive; 60 more expected

From page A1

Forces are set to arrive in the coming days.

"The trainers from the United States military arrived this morning under the invitation of the government of the Philippines to conduct security assistance training with the (Filipino) armed forces," Ambert said.

He said the security assistance training was part of a five-module counterterrorism training program.

In General Santos City, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Dionisio Santiago said Wednesday that US soldiers taking part in the Balikatan 03-1 exercise in Sulu would be sent on test missions against the Abu Sayyaf.

But Santiago immediately clarified that this did not mean the US soldiers would be allowed to engage in a shooting war with the bandits. "They will just retaliate when fired upon by the bandits," he said.

Santiago said the presence of American soldiers in test missions was a vital component of the training program.

"Through this training, both the American and the Filipino soldiers will learn from one another," he said. "Just like the Scout Ranger training, soldiers will not earn their badge until after the test missions."

In last year's Balikatan 02-1 in Basilan, American troops also joined their Filipino counterparts in operations against the bandit group. But military officials said their role was merely advisory.

Pentagon spokesperson Lt. Cmdr. Jeff Davis was earlier quoted in a report as saying that the United States and the Philippines were still discussing the details of a proposal allowing US forces to assist and advise their Filipino counterparts in the field.

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, on the other hand, said the US troops would be in Sulu only to train and learn.

Welcome

Malacañang expects the people of Sulu to welcome the presence of US forces because this will involve not only military training but also "civic and humanitarian projects."

Ignacio Bunye, spokesperson of President Macapagal-Arroyo, said civic and humanitarian projects, like the construction of roads, schools and sanitary facilities, would be a "big component" of Balikatan 03-1.

He said the exercise in Sulu would likely follow the model of Basilan, where the residents "really welcomed the assistance given by US troops."

"Balikatan 03-1 will help in a similar manner in the province of Sulu," he said.

Bunye reiterated that US forces would serve only "as advisers and trainers and will not directly participate in fighting the Abu Sayyaf and other elements."

He said new terms of reference "restating that the American soldiers will not be used for combat" would be drawn up for the Sulu exercise.

"They will be here to observe Filipino troops in order for them to hasten the transfer of military technology and expertise," he added.

Santiago said Balikatan 03-1 activities would be open to the media, to avert suspicion that the US soldiers would actually go after the Abu Sayyaf.

He said Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya would keep the media "abreast of what is happening in the exercise."

But the presence of the US troops in the battlefield could prove to be provocative for the Abu Sayyaf.

Earlier, Abu Sulaiman, allegedly the group's operations officer, said they were already preparing for the arrival of the US soldiers in Sulu.

"We will welcome them in our little way ... and that could be big," he had said.

But the military belittled that threat, saying heavy security measures were being laid to protect the Americans.

This early, a number of skirmishes owing to the military operations in Sulu are being reported.

The latest occurred on Wednesday in Patikul, where at least four Marines were killed.

Not allowed

In Manila, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon reminded the government that the RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty and Visiting Forces Agreement did not allow foreign troops to engage in combat on Philippine soil.

Biazon cited a Supreme Court ruling of April 11, 2002, to back his reminder.

The ruling stemmed from a petition filed by two lawyers questioning the constitutionality of the Balikatan 02-1 exercise in Basilan. It said that while the VFA gave legitimacy to the exercise, US troops were not allowed to engage in an offensive while on Philippine territory.

The high court also took note of the United Nations Charter, which provides that "all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of forces against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state."

Biazon, a former AFP chief of staff, also warned that allowing Americans to conduct offensive operations in Philippine territory could aggravate the "Mindanao problem" because of the complicated relationship between the Abu Sayyaf and the Muslim secessionist rebellion in Mindanao.

"This is going to raise the constitutional and institutional issue of sovereignty and could even affect the peaceful resolution of the Mindanao problem through the peace process," he said.

The senator said that if the government would allow US troops to engage in combat alongside Filipino soldiers, it should be prepared to put Filipinos under the command of American officers.

"US regulations do not allow any of their American units to be placed under the command of any foreign commander whenever there is a joint combat operation," he said. *Reports from Julie S. Alipala and Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Carlito Pablo and Gerald G. Lacuarta in Manila; AP*

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San Sebastian tennis champion

SAN Sebastian won the NCAA men's tennis title via a 10-game sweep on Wednesday at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center. Mentored by Frederick Morgan, the Stags scored a 2-1 victory over defending champion Letran for its first-ever title since 1992. Nilo Salvador and Arvin Ruel starred for the Stags.

NBL begins today

THE NBL (National Basketball League) unwraps the Luzon leg of its first regional championship today with three games at the Tinga gym in Taguig, Rizal.

It will be Pampanga's University of Assumption against Mandaluyong's Wang's Ball Club at 3 p.m., Malabon's Spring Cooking Oil against Cebu's M. Lhuillier-Kwarta Padala at 5 and Ozamiz's Shineway Ham Sausage against Forward Taguig at 6:30.

NBL executive vice president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla will declare the tourney open during the opening ceremony at 4:30 p.m. and make the ceremonial toss together with Basketball Association of the Philippines officials Graham Lim and Tony Fabico, Taguig Mayor Sigfrido Tinga and Ozamiz City Mayor Reynaldo Parojinog.

Biggest PAL Interclub on in Davao

Philippine Airlines
Where Eagles fine
56th PAL INTERCLUB GOLF TOURNAMENT

DUERME hits the ceremonial ball kicking off the 56th PAL Interclub Golf Championship in Davao's Lanang. Among those in the crowd are Davao City Vice Mayor Luis Bonguyan, DFA Undersecretary Rolando Libas, Lanang President Roberto Dakudao Sr., Samal Mayor Roger Antallan, Director-General Isidro Lapena and PAL executive Bong Cruz. EUGENE LABADAN

DAVAO CITY—The PAL Interclub, the nation's acknowledged national team golf championship, starts today with the staging of the 17th edition of the Seniors Tournament.

Hosts of the three-day series ending Feb. 23 are Lanang and the Rancho Palos Verdes Golf & Country Club.

Doming Duerme Jr., the tournament chair, hit the ceremonial tee-shot yesterday in the company of Davao Vice Mayor Luis Bonguyan, Samal Mayor Rogelio Antalan, police regional director Gen. Isidro Lapena, Foreign Affairs undersecretary Rolando Libas, Lanang president Roberto Dakudao, Sr., and PAL executive Felix Cruz.

The Men's PAL Interclub is set from Feb. 26 to March 1 at Apo and Rancho Palos Verdes, with 105.1 Crossover, Airbus, ABS-CBN Global, Air Philippines, CNN International, Fortune Tobacco, GE Aircraft Engines, Joey 92.3, MTV Philippines, PLDT, Premier Wine and Spirits, Radio Mindanao Network, Royal Caribbean International, UMBN/Mindanao Times and Pilipinas Shell among the chief backers. The Marco Polo Davao is the tournament's official hotel.

There were fears over security due to an armed conflict in the area's vicinity. But these were immediately dashed when teams from practically the four corners of the globe rushed to join the twin events.

A record field of 139 teams has been recorded–64 in Seniors play and 75 in the Men's Tournament–making it the largest field in the history of the PAL Interclub. The old mark was 58 Seniors and 70 Men's teams set last year in Bacolod.

Also a record was the big international contingent– 22 teams for Seniors and 31 for Men's.

Among the foreign teams come from newcomers Taipei, Guam, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Dhahran.

The local teams to watch are debuting/comebacking Seniors clubs Eagle Ridge, Sta. Elena, Orchard, Valley and Mactan Coral. All except Eagle Ridge will also see action in the Men's event.

"The prestige of the PAL Interclub outweighed the security concerns so that we now have a record field of participants," said Duerme. "But our security measures are in order to ensure a trouble-free tournament once more." *ASM*

Sinfuego keeps hot-headed Casas at bay

By Jong Arcano

RICHARD Sinfuego doesn't have to think about a different final-round scenario. It's the same old "Beat Cassius Casas" battle cry once again.

Sinfuego could only shoot a one-over-par 73 yesterday but kept the solo leadership when a hot-tempered Casas nosedived with a triple-bogey on the 16th hole in the third round of the First Gentleman's Professional Golf Circuit at the Southwoods Legends.

A breakaway was in the offing for Casas when his sore right shoulder miraculously healed before tee-off time.

He made six front-nine birdies, making four in a row from the third.

Casas' game, however, broke up in the back nine as he stumbled into three straight bogeys from the 13th before three bunker shots on the par-3 16th gave him a fat six.

In a fit of anger, Casas, finishing with a 72, tossed his sand wedge into the pond guarding the green. He trails Sinfuego by two.

The nationwide circuit now on its 12th leg is bankrolled by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo and San Miguel Beer and organized by the Federation of Golf Clubs Philippines, Inc. with WG&A Super Ferry as the official carrier.

The third round scores:
211 - R. Sinfuego 69-69-73
213 - C. Casas 68-73-72
215 - D. Cruz 71-66-78, E. Estrera 71-73-71
217- R. Cabajar 71-75-71, T. Lascuña 73-70-74
218 - C. Villaroman 76-70-72, R. Borreta 70-75-73, M. Pucay 73-73-72, P. Miñoza 75-72-71
219 -, W. Horiguchi 70-73-76, B. Magada 72-72-75, C. LaO 74-72-73, R. Sasutil 74-72-73, R. Broblo 71-77-71
221 - A. Balan 76-69-76

Ateneo paces Samsung tilt

ATENEO led the men's college competition and La Salle-Greenhills the boys event yesterday after the first round of the Samsung National Interscholastics golf tournament at Villamor.

John Gobing and Vendrick Tan tallied 29 points each while Juan Carlos Reyes had 24 as Ateneo posted 82 points to move up by five over La Salle A in men's college play. The Ateneo ladies were nine points clear of the University of Asia and the Pacific.

Behind Gabriel Villareal's 30 points, Ateneo stepped ahead of the fancied Sto Niño Learning Center by one point with the outputs of Amado Eustaquio (19) and Carlo Legaspi (12) making it 60 for the Loyola Golfers under the four-to-play, three-to-count format.

The LSGH squad made up of Ian Intal, Andy Ugarte, Kevin Lachica and Magnum Bakunawa totalled 86 for a five-point lead over sister team La Salle-Zobel. Ateneo A was third at 57.

It was an all-Poveda show in the girls elementary play with Nicole Serapio and Charlene Abalos giving their "C" team a six-point cushion after an 18 and 17, respectively. The D team banked on the 19 of Cristina Potenciano and the 10 of Katya dela Cruz to stay in second.

Subic to host game fishing

THE ANNUAL Philippine Game Fishing Foundation/Subic Bay Yacht Club Interclub Sportfishing tournament is set for Feb. 22-23 and is supported by SBYC Commodore Vic Vic Villavicencio, who is continuing a tradition he started in 1985.

The tournament is the second leg in the Angler of the Year (AOY) circuit being handled by the Philippine Game Fishing Foundation. Capt. Ben Solis is the tournament director.

The event is also open to all anglers and fishing clubs–in two-angler boat teams and four anglers to a club team using 30-lb IGFA line or lower with no limit on the number of rods and reels.

From among 12 AOY tournaments, this is a must-join event for non-PGFF members. Expected to join are many Subic Bay Yacht Club members.

Early entries include Rico Gueco, Bert Lingayo Sr., Bengy Toda, Bobby Garcia, Conrad Cuesta, Atty. Elvin Reyes, Crispin Saez, Ferdi Layson, Lito Tanseco, Jaime Briones, Capt. Ben Solis , Edmund Lim, Jojo Joson, Rey Baguio, Henry Ordinanza, William Ordinanza, Mon Vanta, Virgilio Espiritu and Edong Guzman.

Trophies will go to the Champion Team (up to 4 members per Buddy Boat Team in two boats); Champion Team (2-Angler Boat); 1st Runner-Up Team (2-Angler Boat), 2nd Runner-Up Team (2-Angler Boat); Heaviest Fish (5kg. up to qualify for prize).

For more details, contact PGFF secretary Camille James at tels. 373-0743/373-0248; or e-mail:pgff@yahoo.com.

Benilde, SSC prevail

COLLEGE of St. Benilde and San Sebastian were crowned men's and women's champion, respectively, in the first NCAA beach volleyball tournament at La Salle-Greenhills. The Blazers won over the Stags while the SSC ladies prevailed over Mapua.

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Elorde Awards set March 25

THE GABRIEL "Flash" Elorde Awards Night, the country's most important tribute to outstanding sportsmen and sports leaders in professional boxing, will be held for the third straight year on March 25 during the 68th birth anniversary of the Philippines' greatest boxing legend.

Venue is the Rigodon Ballroom of the Manila Peninsula Hotel where the country's world and national champions as well as outstanding ring judges, referees, trainers, matchmakers, managers and promoters of 2002 will be honored in the "Elorde Banquet of Champions."

The Awards Night is held by the Elorde family in honor of the late "Flash, regarded as the Philippines' greatest boxer of all time and the world's greatest in the junior lightweight division.

Elorde emerged as an international figure four decades after the glory years of Pancho Villa, ruling the junior lightweight division for seven years, from 1960 to 1967.

Buhain slams POC criteria

BUHAIN

PHILIPPINE Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain yesterday criticized the criteria set by the Philippine Olympic Committee, saying it is "laidback" and doesn't conform to the original agreement during their meeting last Friday.

Buhain said the POC technical commission--which included some PSC officials as observers--"merely appealed for honesty" from the national sports associations in recommending athletes to the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games.

He said the criteria set was "lax" because it didn't require medals from the previous SEA Games, which has been the basis of selection in the past.

"This move is not what was agreed upon during our meeting with POC technical commission chair Steve Hontiveros and chief of mission Julian Camacho regarding the selection of athletes," said Buhain.

According to Buhain, the criteria agreed upon were at least a silver medal in the 2001 Kuala Lumpur Games and bronze medal in the 2002 Busan Asiad Games.

The athletes recommended by the POC for the Vietnam Games will then be verified and counter-verified by the commission as well as the PSC monitoring team.

The PSC chief maintained that only those who pass the criteria as agreed upon last Friday will be supported by the agency.

Buhain added that it's better to send a "lean but mean" delegation using maximum funds instead of fielding in a big contingent "caused about by laxity in selection and intended for exposure only."

Marc Anthony Reyes

RACING TIPS

AT SANTA ANA
BY MR. 999

Race 1--1. Ganda 2. Gossip Column 3. Silver Flyer

Race 2--1. Pep Up 2. Express Strike 3. Ebony Starr

Race 3--1. Night Flight/Tribeca 2. Front Page 3. Michael's Way 4. D'Minnows 5. Trick Shot

Race 4--1. Don Benito 2. Vanicx 3. Pabuya 4. Maple My Love

Race 5--1. Space Crusader 2. Midnight Special 3. Colonial Affair 4. Wing Away 5. Blue Bolero

Race 6--1. Rosewood 2. Brazen Truth 3. Tochinic

Race 7--1. Prince of Africa 2. Cash McCall 3. Baby My Beloved 4. Top Mark 5. Inner Silence

Race 8--1. Very Sharp 2. Great Year 3. Winning Post 4. Jhe-Anne D' Great 5. Ray Moon

Race 9--1. May's Magic 2. Make Your Mark 3. Hurry King 4. A Fair to Remember 5. Flirt 6. Diamond Buck/Overland

More runners join Pasig Heritage Marathon

MORE runners will participate in this year's annual staging of the Pasig River Heritage Marathon this Sunday.

"We are happy to announce that there are more full marathon, half marathon and fun run participants this year compared to the last two stagings of the competition," Clean and Green Foundation–Piso Para sa Pasig project director Ramon Socco Jr. said.

The Clean and Green Foundation said it is still receiving late registrants, especially from schools, to date.

Most of the new participants will come from schools and parishes along the marathon route who said they also want the Pasig River to be rehabilitated and revived.

The Pasig River Heritage Marathon is staged yearly to drum up support for the continued rehabilitation and enhancement of the historic Pasig River.

"If we could harness more awareness of the plight of the Pasig River through marathon, then we have already fulfillef our mandate. The marathon is our popular vehicle to achieve this end," Socco added.

Bryant booed but shines again

SALT LAKE CITY—Kobe Bryant continued his torrid scoring run with 40 points as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Utah Jazz 93-87 Wednesday despite playing without Shaquille O'Neal for the second straight night.

Bryant has scored 40 points or more in seven straight games and has at least 35 in his last 11. He scored 11 of the Lakers' final 17 points and got his 40th on a free throw with 8.2 seconds remaining after the Jazz had no choice but to foul him.

The sellout crowd of 19,911 booed Bryant throughout the night, but was chanting "KO-BE! KO-BE!" by the end as he extended the streak by going 1-for-2 on each of his last two trips to the line. Bryant finished 15-for-29 from the floor and 4-of-6 on 3-pointers.

COMPLETE RESULTS

Detroit 89, Toronto 84; New Orleans 87, Washington 75; Minnesota 85, Denver 77; Houston 107, Phoenix 89; LA Lakers 93, Utah 87; Philadelphia 110, Chicago 82; Portland 125, Golden State 98; Seattle 103, New York 94; LA Clippers 110, Milwaukee 104.

AP

Kings vs Celtics today

THE NBA Pacific Division-leading Sacramento Kings face the Boston Celtics today (Friday, Feb. 21) live at 11 a.m. on Solar Sports, with a replay at 9 p.m.

SPORTSWATCH

NBN has option on ad

PBA commissioner Noli Eala yesterday said NBN-4 has the option to conceal the branding of a local toothpaste company on the floor of the Araneta Coliseum from television cameras. ``If NBN-4 wants to take it (Beam toothpaste decals) out completely, it's their choice,'' said Eala. Eala also pointed out that NBN's advertising privilege within the venue is confined only to the rolling advertisements (roll-tech) located in front of the press box and VIP seats.

June Navarro

MCA chess tomorrow

REP. Joey D. Hizon of Manila's fifth district and NCFP president Mat Defensor will grace the MCA Amateur League chess tournament at 7:30 a.m. tomorrow at the Lotus Garden Hotel along Padre Faura, Ermita, Manila. More than P150,000 in cash prizes are at stake in the series supported by Converse, SMB, Okuya Japanese Restaurant, JCA Commercial Signs and Awards Specialists. Call 826-8560 for other details.

Tennis officials elected

NEWLY elected president of the SS Housing Tennis Club sportsman Allan Padilla beat his rivals in the election of officers held last week at SS Housing tennis court in North Fairview, Quezon City. Aside from Padilla, other officers elected were: Marlon Zabala, vice president; Dr. Noel Bercero, treasurer; Ellen Narvadez, secretary; and Bien Corvite, auditor. Members of the board of directors are Danny delos Santos, Jess Familiaran, Ogie Cortez, Nikki Borgona, Ed Lique and Mat Matula.

Monico eyed for lifting post

REP. Monico Puentevella was recently tapped to run for vice president of the powerful Asian Weightlifting Federation which convenes its congress here tomorrow with 25 countries in attendance.

Puentevella said he is honored by the offer but he is interested most of all in boosting the country's "image as the new center of weightlifting in the Asian region."

International Weightlifting Federation president Dr. Tamas Ajan arrived in the country Wednesday night to preside over the congress along with IWF secretary general Yannis Sgouros.

Puentevella said 60 delegates from 25 countries are expected to attend the congress to be held at the Heritage Hotel.

The congress aims to approve and pass a new AWF constitution, calendaring the 2003 Asian events, the Asian Olympic qualifying and the general elections.

"We are indeed honored to be chosen as the main venue of this international gathering," said Puentevella, who stressed that the new congress will bind together the weightlifting associations in the region.

Marc Anthony Reyes

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1990, Joseph Bende Lagua beat Allan Madera in 57 moves of a King's Indian defense to win the Swift "Be A Master" chess tournament at MCC in Makati. Also today in 1990, Andy Tabanas stopped Danny Eslop in the fifth round and scored his eighth straight professional boxing victory in Cebu City.

Pasay derby lines up 50 fights

MORE than 50 fast-paced fights will spice up the "2nd PCCA 4-Cock Derby" at Pasay City Cockpit tonight. Sponsors are Sagupaan Super Feeds and Sagupaan Complexor 3000.

This will be Pasay City Cockpit Cockers Association's (PCCA) second offering for 2003. The inaugural derby was held on Jan. 17 participated in by 25 entries.

According to pit managers Oscar Gonzales, Eric dela Rosa and Butchoy Olano, the PCCA will hold 4-Cock derbies up to June to determine the Cocker of the Year 2003 winner.

Meanwhile, a big 5-cock derby is also set next Friday, Feb. 28, with James Uy as host. Entry fee is P15,000 while minimum bet is P11,000.

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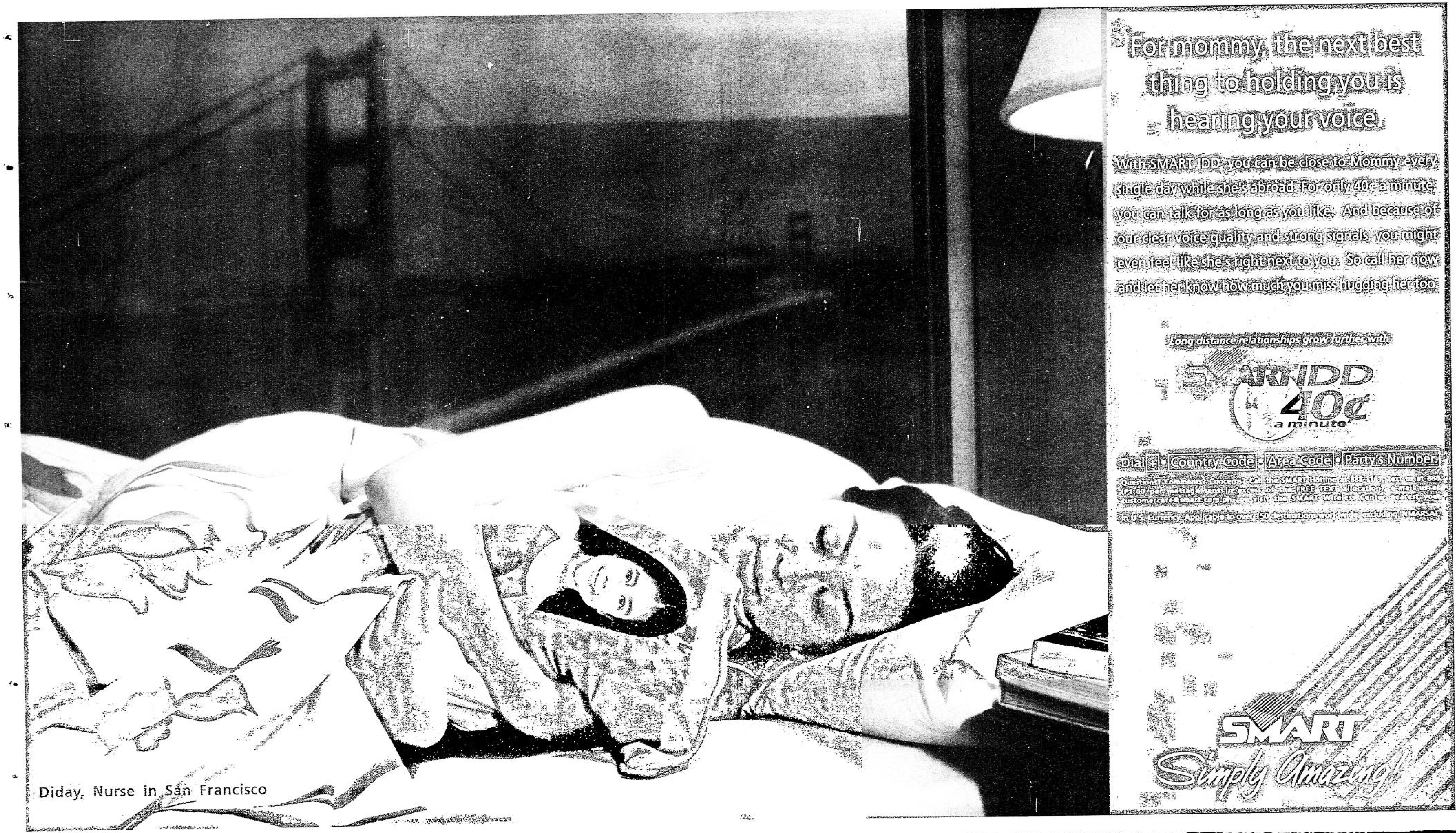
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METRO

Editor Louie C. Camino

◻ WPD clears cop accused of kidnapping A26

▪ Wycoco says he will apologize to Acsa if NBI probe clears her A27

▪ Diana Zubiri sues manager for P I M A27

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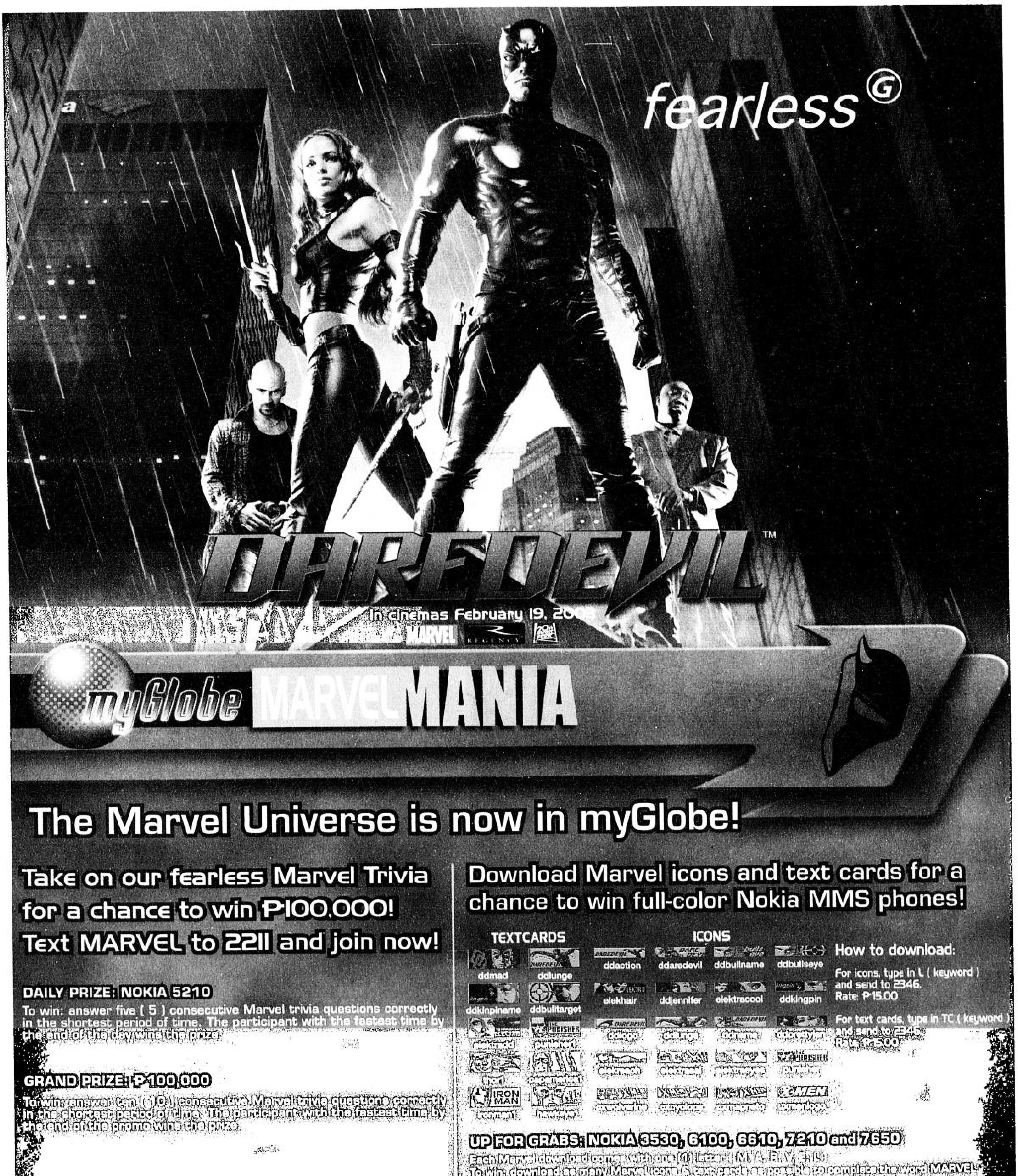

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making great things possible Globe HANDYPHONE

WPD clears cop accused of kidnapping

But victim held against his will, cop chief insists

By Tina Santos

THE VALENZUELA police chief believes that they have a strong case against P03 Pio San Pedro, the Western Police District officer accused of kidnapping Chinese Lei Niu.

Supt. Jose Marcelo said that they have sufficient basis to file kidnapping charges against San Pedro and his alleged accomplice, Ireneo San Andres.

"We studied the elements of kidnapping for ransom, and we found it an appropriate case to file against the suspects," Marcelo said. "They held the victim against his will."

Lei allegedly told the Valenzuela police that "he was forced to go with the suspect to his house in Pulilan, Bulacan, because the suspect threatened to shoot him if he would attempt to escape."

Marcelo said that the suspects held the victim for three days while waiting for the ransom.

Marcelo also downplayed the results of the investigation of the WPD officials clearing San Pedro of the charges of kidnapping.

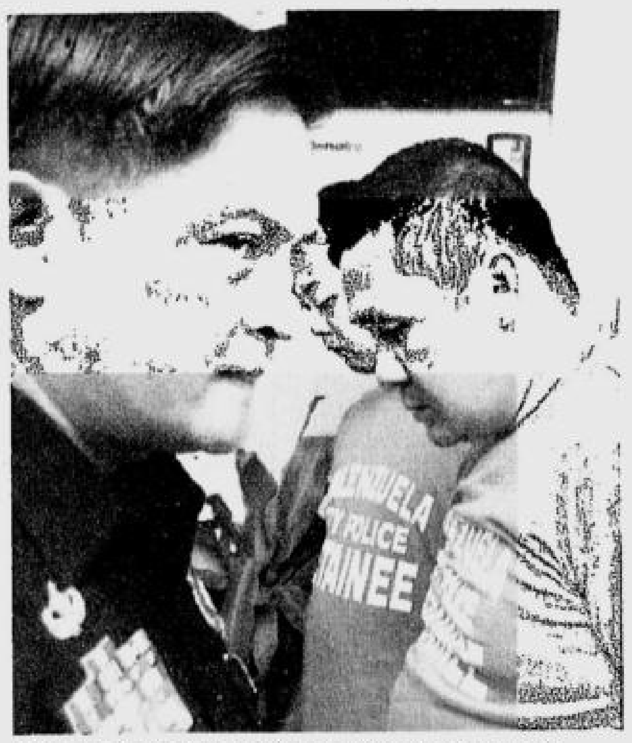
Kidnapping charges have already been filed against San Pedro and San Andres.

The Valenzuela Police also filed additional charges against San Pedro for initially identifying himself as P03 Marlon San Pedro, instead of using his real name Pio San Pedro.

The police official said they received a call from the real Marlon San Pedro right after news of the suspect's arrest came out. This was confirmed by the suspect's superior officer, who even went to their office to confirm that Pio was indeed using somebody else's name.

Marcelo also clarified that it was Lei who filed the complaint, and not the victim's friend, Michael Lee, who negotiated for Lei's release.

San Pedro, who is now detained at the Valenzuela City jail, has refused to comment on the charges.



NCRPO chief Reynaldo Velasco (left) may have been mistaken when he presented PO3 Pio San Pedro (right, foreground) as the abductor of Chinese student Lei Niu, according to WPD investigators. ERIK ARAZAS

By Philip Tubeza

WESTERN Police District officials yesterday said that the Valenzuela police may have committed a mistake when they accused Manila policeman PO3 Pio San Pedro of kidnapping a Chinese student and holding him for ransom in Bulacan.

The WPD's General Assignment Section conducted an investigation and concluded in its report that it found evidence that "seem sufficient to negate the charge of kidnapping against P03 San Pedro."

Director Reynaldo Velasco, head of the National Capital Region Police Office, presented San Pedro to the media on Tuesday for allegedly kidnapping Lei Niu, 29, a student taking up his master's degree at the Seventh Day Adventist International Institute in Manila.

WPD investigators said they were puzzled when they found out that Lei was allegedly treated as a "special guest" in San Pedro's house in Pulilan, Bulacan.

Chief Insp. Arturo Paglinawan, WPD-GAS chief, said they got the statements of San Pedro's neighbors, who said they saw Lei walking around the neighborhood on his own when he was supposed to be detained.

San Pedro's 10-year-old daughter even took Lei to her school, the Sta. Peregrina Elem. School, introduced him to her teachers, and even took him on a tour of the school.

Lei also gave San Pedro's daughter his cellular phone number and e-mail address.

Investigators believe that San Pedro "invited" Lei to his house in the hope that the Chinese would share with him his wealth. Lei was expecting some money from his mother in Beijing.

Lei was supposed to use the money to settle his $11,000 debt to his friend Lu Cong, another Chinese student.

Police said Lei's friend, Michael Lee, a resident of Valenzuela, must have thought that Lei had been kidnapped when Lei called Lee on the phone while Lei was still staying with San Pedro.

Lei's mother, He Bei Shijiahuang, allegedly called Lee from China to tell him to give some money to her son.

Lee called up the Valenzuela police and asked for help. When Lei, San Pedro and Ireneo San Andres, a seaman, went to Lee's home to get the money, San Pedro and San Andres were arrested.

Lei got acquainted with San Pedro after he, Lu, and another student, Bian Jiang, 29, were arrested for fighting outside the Binondo Church at around 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 15.

Lei and Lu exchanged blows because Lei could not pay off his debt, Paglinawan said in his report.

At the station, Lei agreed to pay and to settle with Lu the physical injuries case Lu was supposed to file, Paglinawan said.

After Lei and Lu were charged with breaking the peace, Lei decided not to go with his fellow students, fearing that they might beat him, Paglinawan said.

So Lei stayed in the police station since he had no money. It was there that San Pedro chanced upon him.

"(San Pedro) is good at PR," an investigator said. "He must have heard that the student was expecting some money and so he offered him help."

Paglinawan said San Pedro invited Lei to sleep in his shanty in Binondo before they went to Pulilan.

"Before they went home, they even passed by the market to buy some food," Paglinawan said.

They allegedly also rode public transport.

'We treated the Chinese as a special guest'

By Philip Tubeza

"I THOUGHT he was my husband's friend. We treated him as a special guest."

This was what May San Pedro, 42, said of Chinese national Lei Niu, 29, the man whom her husband, P03 Pio San Pedro, reportedly kidnapped.

"That is not true," May told the INQUIRER on Wednesday. "My husband brought him in as a friend. We entertained him and he was free to leave."

She said Lei even became close to her family during his stay at the San Pedro residence in Balatong B, Pulilan, Bulacan from Sunday afternoon up to the next day.

May said Lei taught her how to cook hot cakes with less ingredients after she washed his clothes and underwear.

The Chinese allegedly also visited the farm of her father-in-law together with her husband on Monday. On Sunday night, her husband and Lei watched a bold VCD before they slept, she said.

And she added that her children now do not want to go to school out of shame.

May said her 10-year-old daughter had brought Lei to the school and even introduced him to her teachers.

She added that Lei also gave her daughter his e-mail address and phone number.

May said Lei and her husband arrived at around 1:30 p.m. on Sunday.

"I though he was Pio's friend," May said. "He usually brings home his friends so I did not ask many questions."

She added that "Lei wasn't handcuffed or anything."

May said the two passed by a market to buy food, which another man brought in for her to cook.

After they arrived, Lei changed his shirt and took a bath. The Chinese then rested while May washed his clothes.

"When he woke up, we had merienda—siomai and bacon," May said.

"I told him not to be ashamed and to feel at home," she said.

"It's OK mam," May qouted him as saying.

The wife said that if Lei had wanted to escape, "he could have done so."

She said Lei also began befriending her children, exchanging stories with them at their terrace.

"He offered to help my children with their studies," May said.

After dinner, they watched VCD.

Then May began ironing their clothes, including Lei's.

"He was touched when he saw me ironing his clothes," May said. "He said his parents did not do that (for him)."

She said that she and her children slept after Lei and her husband watched a bold VCD at 11 p.m.

She woke up at 7 a.m. and began preparing her food stall outside their house. The San Pedro's home is near the Sta. Peregrina Elementray School.

May said Lei taught her how to cook hot cakes with less ingredients and helped her peel off potatoes for her french fries.

At around 9 a.m., Lei joined San Pedro and the two went to the farm of the policeman's father.

After they returned around lunchtime, May's 10-year-old daughter took the Chinese student to Sta. Peregrina "because he wanted to see the school."

"He had only her as a companion," she said. "He could have escaped if he was really kidnapped."

After lunch, Lei sang some songs on the videoke with the San Pedro family, May said.

Her husband and San Pedro then left at around 5 p.m. Four hours later, May got a call that her husband had been arrested.

May said she tried to talk to Lei at the police station, but the police did not allow her.

Cops slam practice of parading suspects before cameras

IT WAS the turn yesterday of Manila policemen to urge their superiors not to present suspects before the media and allow due process to run its course.

SP02 Antonio Emmanuel, Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association Inc. spokesperson, said suspects should not be presented before cameras until the "investigation is finished."

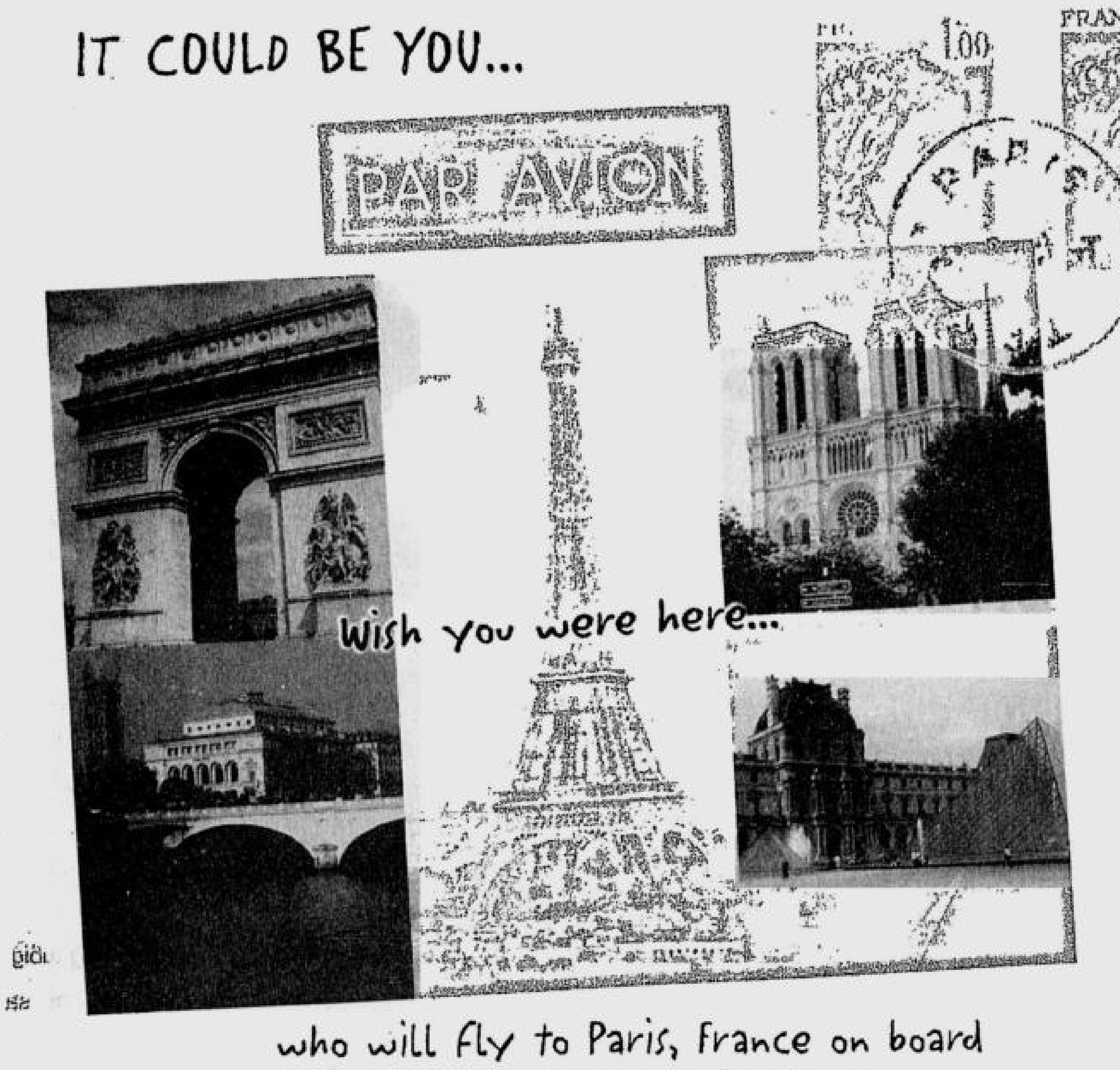
Emmanuel made the call after Binondo policeman P03 Pio San Pedro was presented to the media following his arrest for allegedly kidnapping a Chinese national.

"They should have given him due process first," Emmanuel said. "They haven't even filed the case with the fiscal when he was presented."

"If it is proven that he is innocent, what will happen?," he asked. "He had already been paraded before the cameras. That is the moral lesson."

"Human rights require that suspects be given due process first before they are condemned," Emmanuel added.

While the MBFAI supported the government's campaign against the crime, everyone should be careful so as not to erroneously convict the innocent, he said. *Philip Tubeza*



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Diana Zubiri sues manager for ₱1M

By Leah Salterio

BOLD star Diana Zubiri yesterday filed a case against her former manager James S. Mercado for the annulment of her management contract with him and asked him to pay her P1 million in moral and exemplary damages.

Zubiri, 17, was assisted by her sister and guardian, Wilma Garcia Sarmenta, in filing the case at the Regional Trial Court Branch 126 in Caloocan City.

She said in her complaint that on Nov. 15, 2001, she applied as a singer at the Skyhigh Promotions Agency in Quezon City where she met Mercado. She said he asked her if she would like to be an actress like Assunta de Rossi or Rica Peralejo and offered to bring her to Seiko Films to meet producer Robbie Tan.

She said that after the meeting with Tan, Mercado asked her for a copy of her birth certificate, and altered her birth year from 1985 to 1983 before giving it to Tan.

She said Mercado assured her "it was the practice in show biz to change the age."

In January 2002, Mercado gave Zubiri a management contract, but did not explain to her its contents and did not allow her to show it to her parents or guardian before she signed it. She said that he told her that he would have her arrested and thrown in jail if she violates the contract.

ZUBIRI

Mercado got Zubiri a lead role in the Seiko Films bold flick "Itlog," where she was paid P50,000. But Zubiri complained she was not getting her actual talent fee for shows and other personal appearances. She said she learned Mercado had booked her for P20,000 for show but told her the booking was only for P10,000.

When she became enmeshed with Mandaluyong Mayor Benhur Abalos because of a controversial magazine pictorial, Mercado distanced himself from her and resued to help her "for fear that he would be involved if it was revealed that she is really a minor."

The bold actress said Mercado had even threatened and harassed her through text messages, phone calls and demand letters.

Wycoco says he will apologize to Acsa if NBI probe clears her

By Philip C. Tubeza

NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco said he would personally apologize to Land Bank of the Philippines cashier Acsa Ramirez after the NBI finishes its investigation and Ramirez is cleared of alleged involvement in the P431-million tax diversion scam last year.

Wycoco said that the Ombudsman's decision to clear Ramirez was just the "first round."

"Later on when this legal process is finished and Ramirez is acquitted, then I'll apologize," he said in a radio interview. "There is no problem.

"I myself will go to her to apologize but we need to finish this first," he added.

The NBI has said that the Ombusman's decision does not preclude its right to file a case against Ramirez if they find incriminating evidence against her in the future.

But Ramirez's lawyer Virginia Pinlac hit the NBI's attempt "to justify their mistake."

"They're that desperate. They still want to justify the mistake they made. It's up to them. We'll just face what they'll throw at us," Pinlac said.

She noted that the Ombusman's decision already covered all the four fictitious accounts used to divert the P431 million in taxes.

But Wycoco said that it was just the "first round" and compared the case to the Nida Blanca killing and the double murder of publicist Bubby Dacer and his driver Emmanuel Corbito.

"(Rod) Strunk's lawyers lost in the first round (when the Department of Justice decided to file the case in court). We did not demand an apology from them because we know that we are only doing our job. *Walang personalan* (Nothing personal)," Wycoco said.

He said this also happened in the Dacer-Corbito case.

But militant groups said Ramirez should file counter charges against Wycoco and President Macapagal-Arroyo for presenting her to the media even before the investigation was finished.

"We arrived at the truth based on the decision of the Ombudsman and it is the time to give her (Ramirez) justice and go after those who maligned her in public, including but not limited to Ms. Macapagal and Mr. Wycoco," said Fernando Hicap of Pamalakaya.

Bayan Muna Rep. Crispin Beltran said that the President's cavalier attitude toward Ramirez is unbecoming of the land's highest official.

"Ms. Ramirez was brave enough to come forward and speak of all she knew about the tax scam, but Malacañang wronged her by accusing her of the very same crime she exposed," Beltran said.

"Now that she has been officially cleared by the Office of the Ombudsman of all involvement, Ms. Ramirez deserves to be treated like a heroine, and the President herself should apologize to her.

"(For) her part, President Arroyo's refusal to apologize betrays her deep-seated contempt for ordinary folk. She should swallow her pride, and say sorry to Ms. Ramirez," Beltran added.

10 fire trucks arrive to put out fire near oil depot

By Philip C. Tubeza

WHEN fire yesterday broke out in a two-story apartment near the Pandacan Oil Depot in Manila, 10 fire trucks arrived to extinguish the blaze.

The fire broke out in the unit of businesswoman Anabelle Lopez, 40, of 2313 Flerida St., Pandacan, Manila at 6:51 a.m., said arson investigators.

It reached the second alarm but 10 fire trucks quickly arrived and put out the flames at 7:21 a.m. yesterday.

The damage was limited to only P10,000, but arson investigators are still trying to determine what caused the fire.

Pandacan residents have protested the presence of the oil depot in their midst for being a fire hazard, health threat and terrorist target.

The Manila City Council has passed an ordinance mandating its closure last year, but the oil firms operating the depot–Shell, Petron and Caltex– have appealed, saying that it would affect the fuel supply in Metro Manila.

4 Manila cops accused of maltreating woman in drug bust relieved

By Philip C. Tubeza

MANILA policemen SPO3 Nestor Bustamante, PO2 Redentor Delos Santos, PO2 Emmanuel Bautista, and PO1 Bernardito David, of the Western Police District-Drug Enforcement Unit, were relieved by Manila police director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong after a female cigarette firm executive whom they mistook for a drug dealer accused them of maltreating her last Saturday.

The policemen were after a drug dealer identified as Nene Estrella and mistook the complainant for her.

The complainant, who did not want to be named, said she was not going to file charges against the policemen after they apologized. But she changed her mind when she read the incident report of team leader Delos Santos, where the policemen claimed they were polite and properly introduced themselves as lawmen.

She said she was driving her company car along Solis Street in Tondo at 6:30 a.m. Saturday when a car blocked her path and another police car bumped her in the rear. Several armed men in civilian clothes came out of the vehicles, cursed her and threatened to kill her when she asked them what it was about. One of them even pointed a gun at her. She asked them repeatedly if they were policemen, but they did not identify themselves, the executive claimed.

When she told them they could take her car and pleaded with them not to hurt her, they only told her to shut up and dragged her by the collar into their car.

Out of fear, she urinated in her car and again in the men's vehicle.

The men continued to curse her as they urged her to confess how many kilos of drugs she had. She denied she had drugs and again asked her captors if they were policemen. They drove off to the corner of Pampanga Street and Aurora Boulevard and met another car. When her car, driven by one of her captors, arrived, the men searched its trunk and the bags inside her vehicle.

When they failed to find any drugs inside her car, they drove toward Abad Santos and stopped at a gas station where an unseen informant told her captors over the radio that she was not their target. The complainant said that her captors suddenly became polite and started apologizing. They also allowed her to call her superior in her company then brought her to the WPD headquarters.

"Ma'am sorry, we had a 'Wow Mali'," one policeman told her, referring to the popular practical jokes television show.

The complainant said the WPD-DDEG head Chief Insp. Marcelino Pedrozo also called her up to apologize.

She has filed a case against the policemen before the Manila City Public Law Enforcement Board, and criminal charges will come later.

Marijuana goes up in smoke

By Tina Santos

ABOUT 67 kilos of dried marijuana bricks with a street value of about P1M turned up in a burning garbage pile Wednesday in Valenzuela City, police reported yesterday.

Inspector Rio Gatacilo of the Northern Police District Office-Scene of the Crime Office Chief said that the marijuana bricks were apparently for pick-up when they were intercepted by authorities.

Valenzuela City drug enforcement unit chief Insp. Danilo Bugay said the dried marijuana bricks were contained in three sacks and were discovered by an unidentified tricycle driver at about 7 a.m. Wednesday burning in a garbage pile in Sitio Tatalon, Barangay Ugong.

The tricycle driver said the distinct smell of burning marijuana led him to the burning pile of garbage.

He then rummaged through the pile and found the marijuana stuffed inside three rice sacks.

The Soco chief said that the marijuana might have come from Isabela.

"It could be that the courier abandoned the marijuana for fear of being caught, or a drug deal did not push through," he said.

Police are conducting follow-up investigation on the case.

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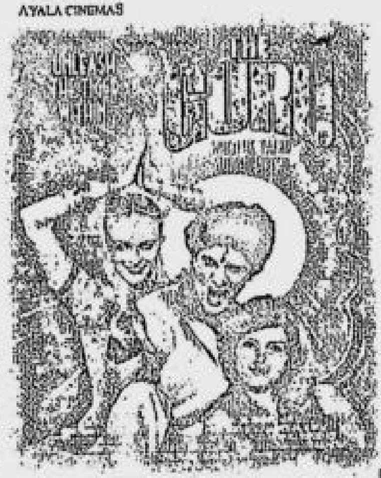

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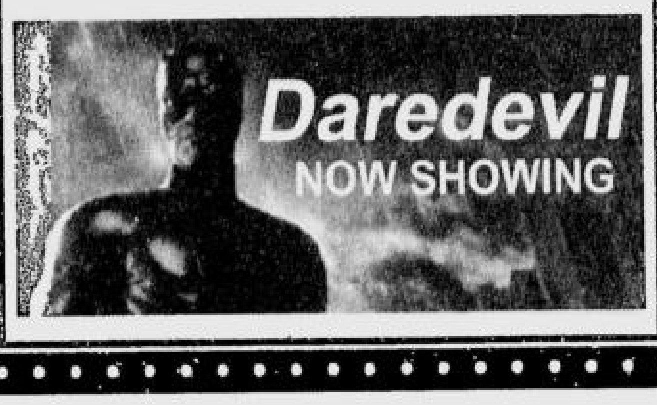

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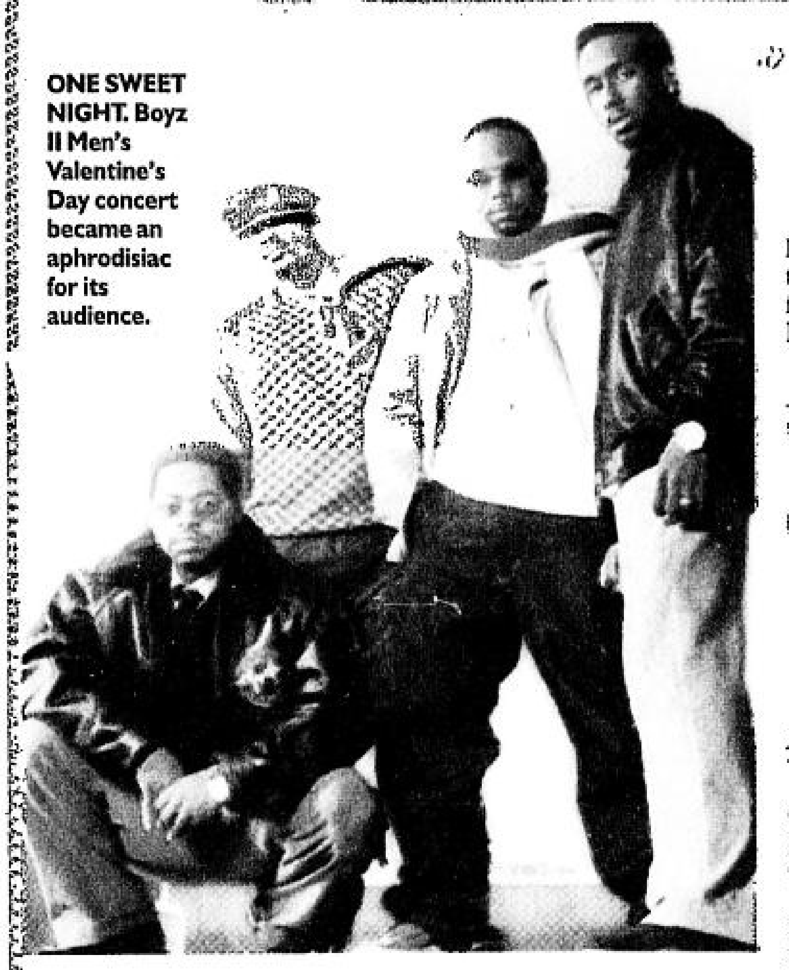


ONE SWEET NIGHT. Boyz II Men's Valentine's Day concert became an aphrodisiac for its audience.

Boyz II Men makes love to Manila yuppies

By Vladimir S. Bunoan
Contributor

REVIEW

THE ONE-night-only performance of the R & B group Boyz II Men last Valentine's Day ranks among the most enjoyable concerts Manila has seen.

It has been quite a while since local concert goers were treated to a foreign act of this caliber in a setting of this magnitude. While local audiences were regularly treated to football field performances by artists like Sting, Phil Collins and Gloria Estefan in the last decade, recent visitors had to make do with smaller enclosed venues like the Philippine International Convention Center and Araneta Coliseum.

Is Boyz II Men such big a draw? Apparently. An estimated 22,000 music fans trooped to the open field of The Fort last Friday.

Valentine's Day or not, the atmosphere at The Fort was festive, bringing back many good memories of the days when this sprawling city-in-development was the hottest ticket on Friday and Saturday nights.

Standstill

Crowds hustled for seats in The Fort's handful of restaurants before the show, while traffic on McKinley Road was at a standstill. Yet, despite the hassle, everyone seemed to be in high spirits.

The Boyz II Men crowd was mostly yuppies, with many couples. The romantic atmosphere was not lost on Boyz II Men. Throughout the two-hour-plus-long show, the group's members repeatedly noted that there was so much love in the air.

The group's Shawn Stockman said this was the most loving audience they had played to in the past two-and-a-half years on the road.

While such comments may appear like usual crowd banter, that night it's hard to argue with this observation. On numerous moments, you really just wanted to melt away and hold on to your partner.

A couple beside us couldn't fight that feeling anymore and embraced tightly for what seemed like a long time.

But much of the credit for the romance is really due to Boyz II Men.

Their music, in particular. While the group began as the heir apparent of New Edition in the early 1990s, Boyz II Men became more known for big soulful ballads. The group's name was actually a New Edition song and the group's first manager was Michael Bivins of New Edition and Bell Biv Devoe.

A capella

It's a natural progression since Boyz II Men's strength has always been tight four-part vocal harmonies. A more apt reference for the group's sound is not New Edition but Take Six, although without the complex jazz arrangements.

Boyz II Men's roots lie more in street corner a capella, as evidenced by its cover of "In the Still of the Night," one of its earlier hits. But in keeping with the music flavor of the time, Boyz II Men burst into the scene with the upbeat "Motownphilly," a New Jack swing number that incorporated the catchy groove of Motown with a dash of Philadelphia soul, plus some jazz-like bridges.

But the group's sound and its reputation as a hitmaker were really built on the phenomenal success of "End of the Road" from the soundtrack of the Eddie Murphy-starrer "Boomerang." It stayed atop the Billboard singles chart for 11 weeks, tying Elvis Presley's record for "Heartbreak Hotel."

The group's next single, "I'll Make Love to You," even managed to better that record with 13 weeks at No. 1, and then "One Sweet Day" with Mariah Carey smashed that further with a 16-week reign at the top.

Track record

While Boyz II Men no longer sells as many records as it used to, it remains a vital force in R & B. Last year, the group released its seventh studio album, "Full Circle," with the hit single "The Color of Love," whose video ends with the Boyz staring at a post-9/11 New York skyline.

With such a track record, it's no wonder Boyz II Men managed to attract that much attention in Manila. Although some concertgoers note the group's lack of "visual appeal," especially in today's boy band era, their string of hits was really more than enough to sustain interest.

The group didn't waste any time that night, with the strong one-two punch of "On Bended Knee" and "4 Seasons of Loneliness" high up on the set list. Despite the lyrical clichés of "On Bended Knee" (and the number did end with Stockman kneeling), its emotional rendition was hard to resist.

The more languid, morning-after groove of "4 Seasons of Loneliness" balanced it off with dreamy, easy harmonies. By that time, people were beginning to warm up.

Gone crazy

Boyz II Men became more known for big soulful ballads. Yet, the group is aware that you can't stage a concert with just ballads, no matter how well performed.

The more upbeat numbers arguably aren't as memorable as its ballads, but songs like "Howz About It" with its mid-tempo rhythm and the hip-hop "Ain't A Thang Wrong," which samples and ends with a hook from DeBarge's 1980s hit "I Like It," were enough to maintain the momentum.

Moreover, the Boyz proved adept at getting the audience to participate.

The usual "Say yeah" banter still worked wonderfully. The lengthy band solos also helped in sustaining the excitement so that when the Boyz launched into a popular hit, the crowd would just go crazy.

Which was exactly what happened when Boyz II Men went into its "classics," starting with "Water Runs Dry," followed by "I'll Make Love to You," and then "End of the Road."

The back-to-back-to-back hits should leave the crowd hoarse for a day or so. And as a bonus treat for the ladies, the guys threw red

BOYZ/ A30

Caparas shows no let-up in filming Cory Quirino biopic

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Leah Salterio

DIRECTOR **Carlo J. Caparas**, who returned to the director's chair after a brief hiatus from filmmaking, is now in the thick of work for his latest project, "The Cory Quirino Story."

Carlo shows no let-up in filming, since the cameras started to grind at the NBI office last Feb. 1, the first shooting day of the film-bio.

Carlo works overtime with the cast and crew, filming day and night, so as not to lose momentum.

"That's how I really work," Carlo says. "While we were shooting the rape scene for 'The Maggie de la Riva Story,' we worked straight from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. using four cameras. The next day, **Dawn Zulueta** was hospitalized."

Yet, Carlo is careful not to let the rigorous filming take its toll on the health of his cast members, especially **Ara Mina**, who plays the lead.

"The Cory Quirino Story" is the film-bio of the grand-daughter of the late Pres. **Elpidio Quirino**, which highlights her celebrated kidnapping in Quezon province in 1995.

The movie will show snatches of **Cory**'s life from childhood to her career, family and even social life.

Based on the book "Waiting for the Light," which Cory also wrote to relive her three-day, nightmarish ordeal in the hands of her abductors, the film will reveal more details the public hardly knows about with regard to the kidnapping.

Carlo is thankful for the support of Cory during filming.

"She was always on the set to give her inputs to the production, coach Ara Mina on the right thing to do or simply to provide moral support to the other cast members," Carlo says of Cory. "Her presence is a big factor in completing the movie."

The production also gets full support from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), which helped solve the crime and put the kidnappers behind bars. Through NBI director Gen. **Reynaldo Wycoco**, the production has been assured of any possible assistance the bureau can extend throughout the filming, using NBI files to be faithful to the story and the actual incidents which took place.

In fact, Wycoco, has even agreed to play himself in the movie.

The actors who are playing the kidnappers are led by **Zoren Legaspi** and **Ian de Leon**, with **Richard Arellano**, **Mon Confiado** and **Paolo Rivero**.

REAL AND REAL. Cory Quirino (third from left) with actress Ara Mina who is portraying her onscreen and the "kidnappers" (from left) Richard Arellano, Zoren Legaspi, Ian de Leon, Mon Confiado and Paolo Rivero.

"Zoren is really mean in this movie and proves how good he is in portraying a *contravida* role," Carlo notes. "He is the leader of the kidnapping gang, merciless, ruthless and devilish. He shows a different kind of acting in this movie.

"Ian, meanwhile, is a revelation. He has never played a bad guy role, but he did it very convincingly."

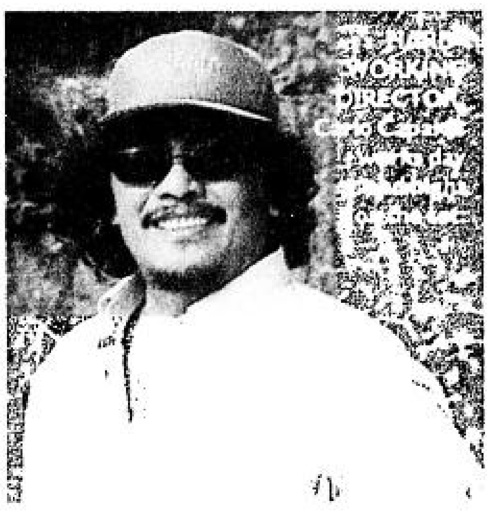
Mon has played villain in a number of action movies. Richard, who started as a child actor in the series "Heredero," also did challenging roles in theater plays. Paolo Rivero is one of the headliners of **Joey Reyes**' controversial sex-drama, "Live Show."

Playing Cory's assistant **Helen Salaver** is young actress **Alessandra de Rossi**. Completing the cast of the movie are **Eddie Gutierrez**, **Joel Torre**, **Gloria Romero**, **Robert Arevalo**, **Tommy Abuel**, **Ronnie Lazaro**, **Maggie de la Riva** and **Ronaldo Valdez**.

The ordeal which Cory suffered in the hands of her kidnappers is different, though, from the ordeal that Ara Mina experiences in the hands of her director. Carlo, after all, is "notorious" for executing violent scenes on screen in his previous massacre movies.

On Sunday, Carlo will resume filming and take cast and crew to Subic, which will substitute for the Quezon backdrop. Noted directors such as **Peque Gallaga** and **Celso Ad Castillo** will make cameo appearances in the film.

Carlo and his wife, **Donna Villa**, act as producers of "The Cory Quirino Story" for the family outfit Golden Lion Films. In the past, the production company has churned out other box office hits like "Vizconde Massacre" with **Kris Aquino** and "Lipa Massacre" with **Vilma Santos**.



Anne Curtis . . .

From page A31

going against my parents' will. Going out on dates with guys doesn't mean I'm already flirting with them. It's not like I kiss a guy even if he's not yet my boyfriend."

Anne said she still asks permission from her dad, James Curtis Smith, whenever she goes on dates. She says she always sees to it that she never breaks the 1:30 a.m. curfew her father has set for her.

"My dad always told me that, as long as I'm living with them, I follow his rules."

She said she and Greg went out to watch the Boyz II Men concert at The Fort last Valentine's Day. She had discovered that she and Greg have things in common. Both were born and raised in Australia, for one thing.

"Greg is very nice," she said. "He's the perfect gentleman. But I still prefer Filipino guys because they tend to spoil their girlfriends rotten."

Anne is seen regularly on three GMA 7 shows—"Beh Bote Nga," "Bubble Gang" and "SOP." She is also set to do a movie for Viva Films.

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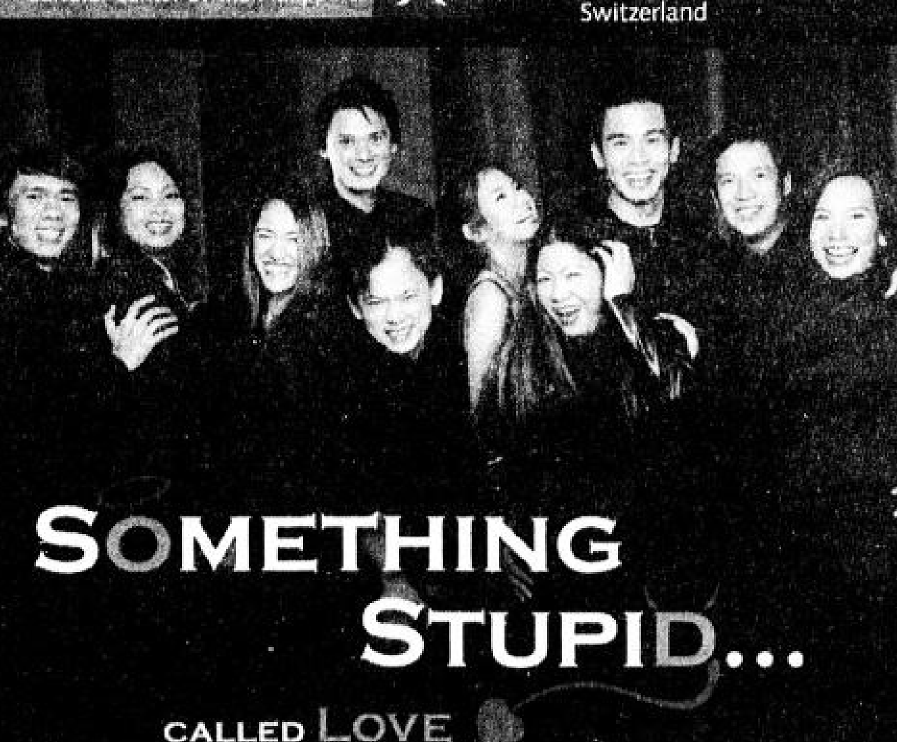

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VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: What do you have to say about your relative who has been saying such bad things against you?

Guest: *Sa totoo lang*, she's not in my class, *no*? *Wala siyang* breathing, she's not saying true!

(*Ay*, breathing!)

***

Host: How long *na ba kayo ng* husband *mo*?

Guest: Five years *na kaming* marriage.

(That long, huh?)

***

Host: What about the accusation that you are involved with married men?

Guest: Of course not! *'Di ako tipong babae na magho-homewreck ng pamilya ng may pamilya!*

(So that's how you use "homewreck" as a verb!)

***

Host: How do you relate to your children? Are you a strict parent?

Guest: Not really. Basically is, I trust them. I don't check everyday *naman* their absences or their presences!

(Absences and presences?—*Bago 'yon, a.*)

***

Host: Describe your house.

Guest: Well, it's big, because we have a big family.

Host: Where do you receive your visitors?

Guest: If it's formal, like a party, it's in the sitting *sala* of our house.

(Huh?)

***

Host: What, of all your many activities, is your top priority?

Guest: Of course, my motherhood. Proud of *kasi ako maging isang ina!*

(*Ay*, proud of.)

***

Host: How important is family to you?

Guest: Very. I'm always looking for family.

I want to be belonged, *talaga!*

(*Ay*, to be belonged!)

***

Host: Is acting still a part of your priorities?

Guest: Well, of course. Once an art, always an art!

(That's so true.)

***

Host: Who has influenced you the most?

Guest: Oh, so many!

Host: Choose only one.

Guest: Choosing only one, it would be my mother. My mom is really a good guidance to me!

(A good guidance?)

***

Host: Are your children as close to their father as they are with you?

Guest: Oh, yes. They have nothing against with their dad!

(Nothing against with?)

***

Host: What are you looking forward to this year?

Guest: Well, for one, my high school class, *magkakaroon kami ng ruinion!*

(*Ay*, ruinion!)

New promotions

ABS-CBN Management announces the promotion of two of its television executives: **Johnny Manahan** as senior vice president for the Talent Development and Management division, and **Carmencita Guerrero** as vice president for Special Projects.

Aside from managing the ABS-CBN Talent Center, Manahan is also the resident director of many of the network's programs, and has directed all of the network's special events and concerts.

As vice president for Special Projects, Guerrero will continue mounting special events and corporate projects for ABS-CBN.

'The Wild Thornberrys'

"THE WILD Thornberrys" brings television's popular young globetrotter to the big screen. The Emmy-nominated Nickelodeon Channel's series has become such a hit that this animated feature film is eagerly awaited by the TV show's fans.

The lead character, 12-year-old Eliza, can communicate with animals. This unique gift takes her to the Serengeti Plains in Africa. There, she comes face-to-face with evil animal poachers who are endangering the lives of nature's wild creatures.

Featured are the voices of guest celebrities like **Brenda Blethyn, Rupert Everett, Lyn Redgrave, Marisa Tomei** and **Alfre Woodard.**

Boyz II Men . . .

From page A29

roses stem by stem throughout "I'll Make Love to You."

Some music critics have slammed Boyz II Men for not daring to tweak its winning formula. Indeed, the chord progressions in many of the songs and even the production are actually similar. But how can you argue with the warm feelings these tunes conjure? Unlike most saccharine radio-friendly ballads, Boyz II Men's blend of sensual grooves and sweet—maudlin, actually—declarations is really sexy. And when Wanya Morris goes into his tortured adlibs, you're just stomped by the guy's talent and vocal dexterity.

I missed the sentimental narration of "End of the Road" ("All those times at night when you hurt me and just ran out with that other fella/ Baby I know about it/ I just didn't care/ You just don't understand how much I love you, do you?/ I'm here for you"), although looking back, that might have been too much.

Good ending

Amazingly, Boyz II Men was able to sustain crowd interest after that emotional peak all the way through the finale, "Motownphilly." The encores included "A Song for Mama" which, despite the lyrics, was still a good ending number for a Valentine's Day concert (although "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday" might have been more fitting). And yes, the audience missed hearing "One Sweet Day," but without Carey, the impact might have been lessened.

Although Boyz II Men was missing one member (Michael McCary) for this tour, the remaining three guys instinctively worked up the crowd.

With Boyz II Men, it doesn't really matter who's doing lead vocals, although Stockman seems to be the most confident in crowd-handling. His singing style is mellower than Wanya Morris', while the third member, Nathan Morris, actually has a suave vocal quality.

On certain numbers, it appeared as if there was a pre-recorded track, obviously for the samples and some electronic vocal effects, resulting in a very rich, yet at times overly busy, sound. That the sound system seemed muffled at times also contributed to this confusion, and the vocals weren't as crisp as you'd expect.

But in the end, it was the sexy groove and the emotional soul that made Boyz II Men Live in Manila a truly memorable concert experience. With the added Valentine's Day mood, it became the concert version of an aphrodisiac, prom night for yuppies.

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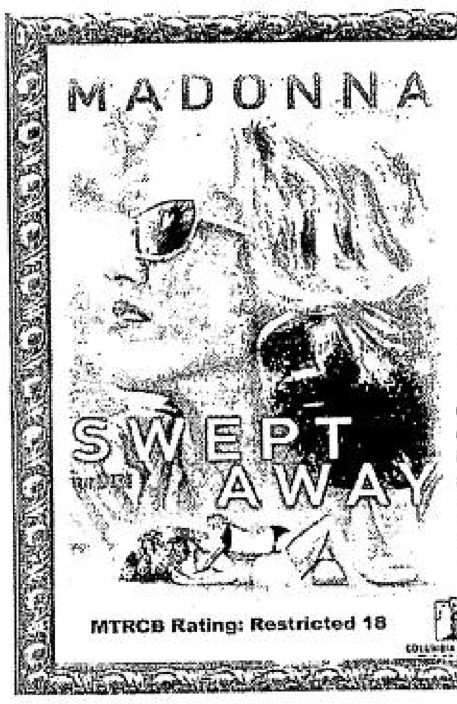

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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino

Anne Curtis 18 and following rules

READ HER LIPS. She has no qualms about wearing a two-piece "but I'll never go bold," says new 18-year-old Anne Curtis.

By Marinel R. Cruz

SO YOUNG and so controversial, Anne Curtis is.

Anne is celebrating her 18th birthday tonight at the Garden Ballroom of the Edsa Shangri-la Hotel and has asked Oyo Boy Sotto and Cogie Domingo, among others, to participate in her cotillion de honor.

Luis Philippe Manzano and Greg Turvey will also attend the party, according to the birthday girl.

Much earlier, Oyo Boy and Cogie figured in a fist fight reportedly over Anne. More specifically, Oyo Boy reportedly punched Cogie because he wanted the other young man to stop seeing Anne, then his girlfriend.

She has also dated Luis and Greg, the twin brother of the more well-known Brad Turvey, who's modeling Penshoppe with Mandy Moore.

A few days before she turns 18, Anne said that although she has gone out with several other guys, Oyo Boy would remain the closest to her heart. The two broke up several months before the showing of their movie "Lastikman" last month.

Oyo Boy is the son of actress Dina Bonnevie and comedian Vic Sotto, who played the title role in "Lastikman."

Anne said she and Oyo Boy tried to revive their relationship of almost two years, but it just did not work out.

"I guess he thought I would always be there to run after him," she said.

"It's now time to say enough is enough.

Anne found herself the subject of show biz stories when she started dating again only months after breaking up with Oyo Boy.

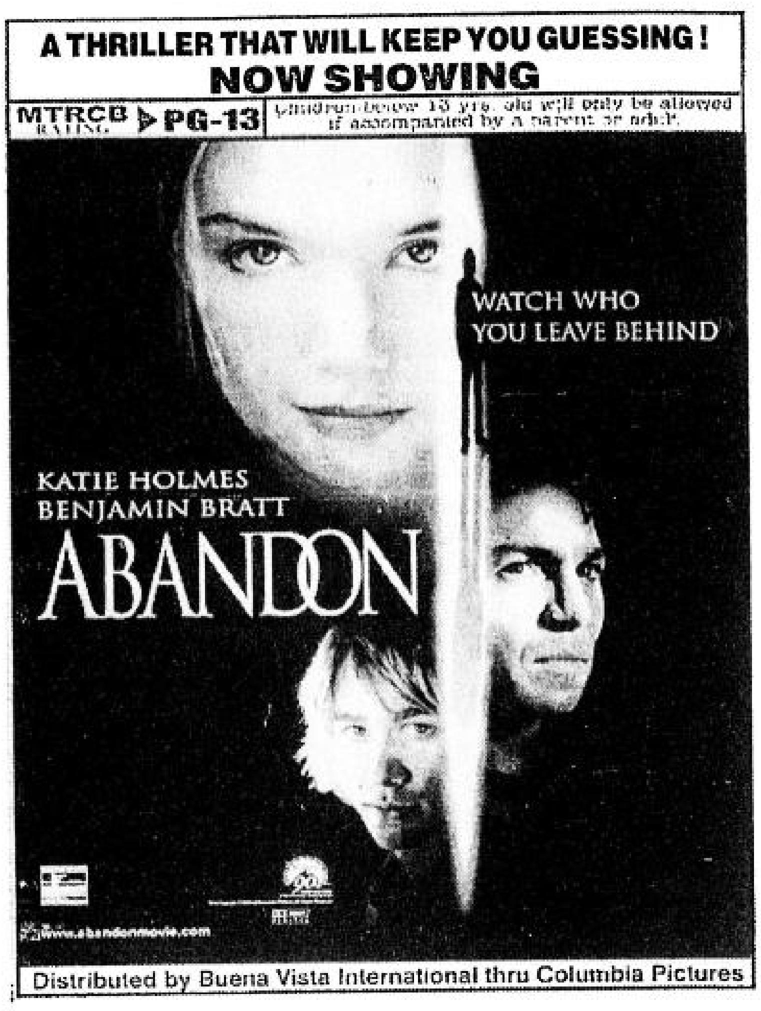
"*Maraming nagalit sa akin*," she said. "Many people called me a playgirl."

Show biz guys she dated included video jock and mode Derek Ramsey, Luis, Cogie, and most recently, Greg.

Anne reacted to the stories by simply shrugging her pretty shoulder. She said she is old enough to take care of herself.

"I don't see anything wrong with going out on dates," she said. "I know I'm not

ANNE/ A29



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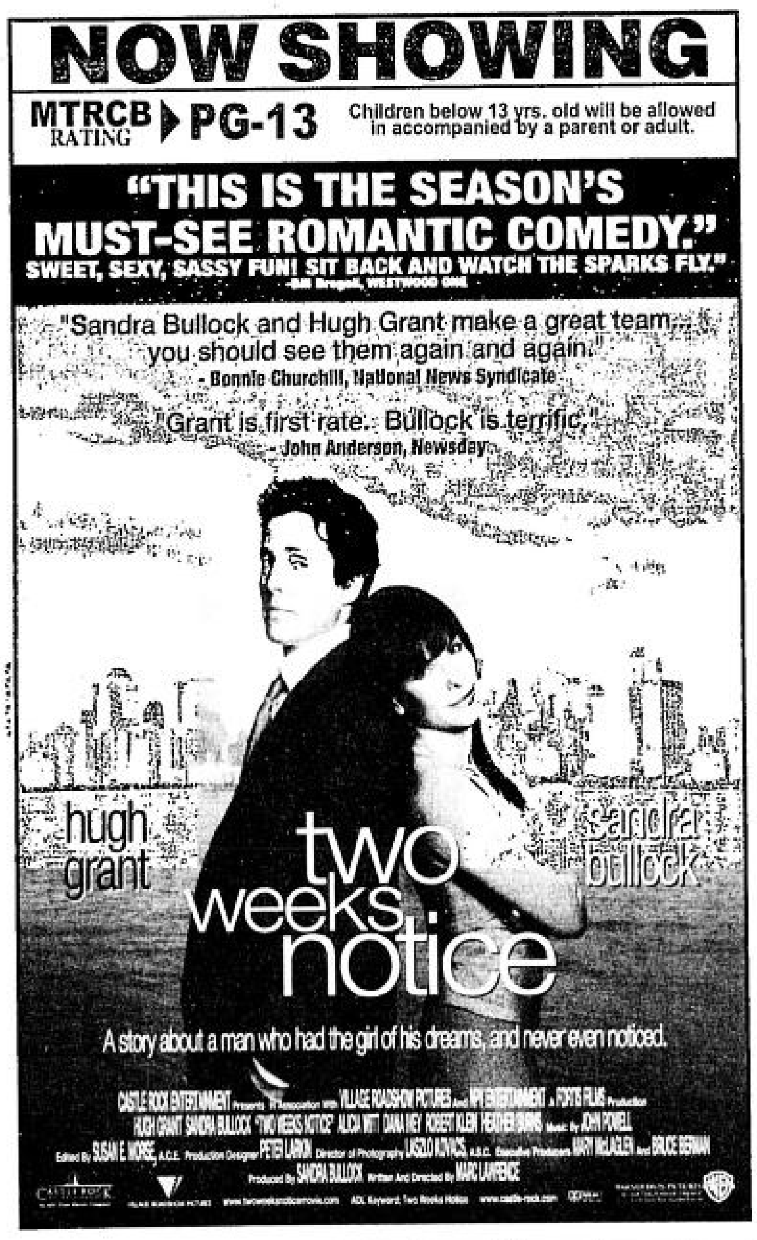

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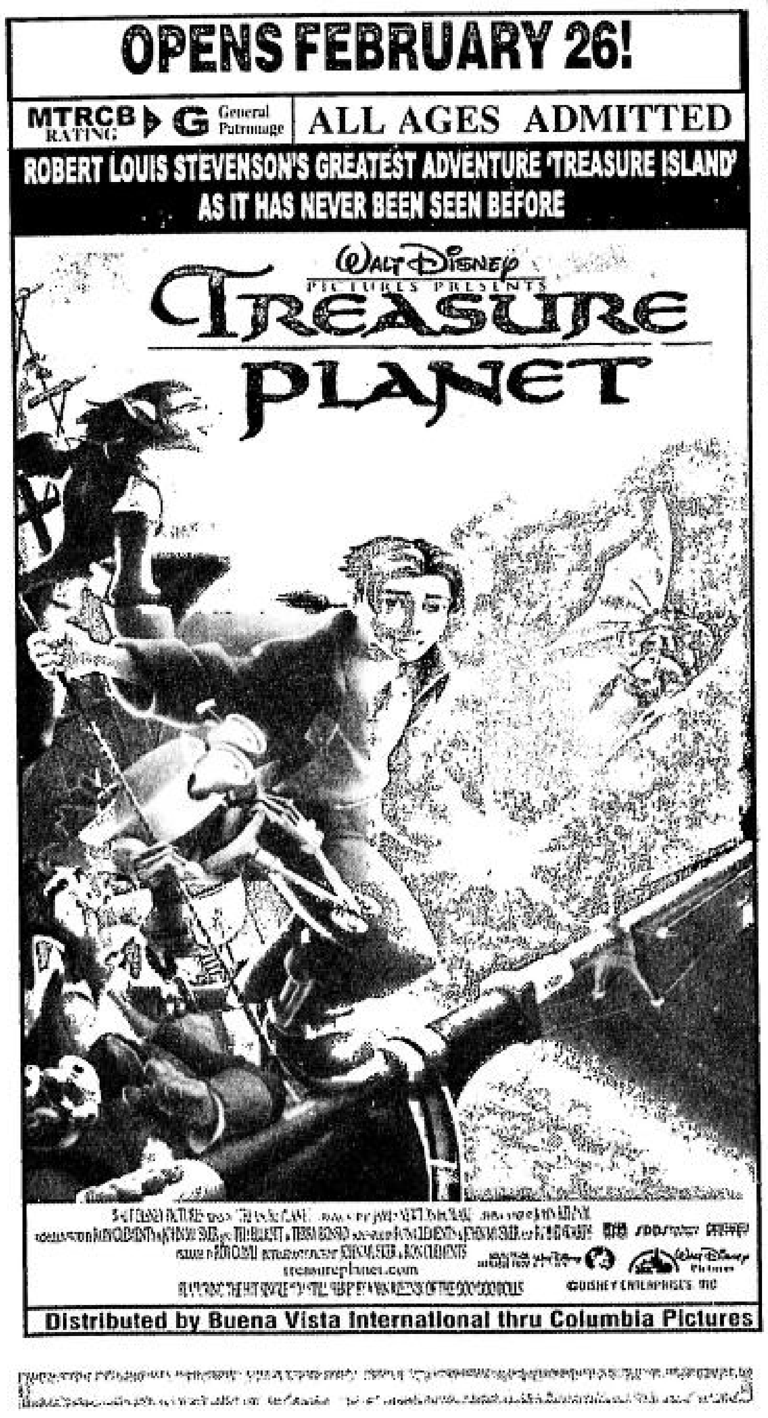

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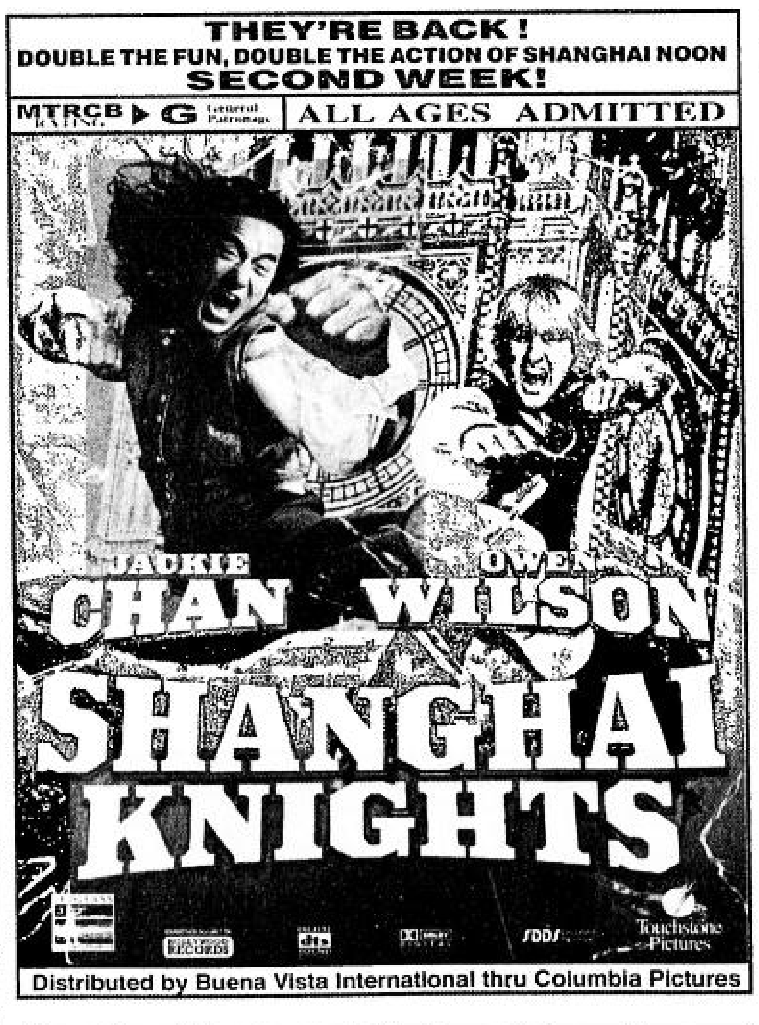

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- The First really good movie of 2003! - Lito B. Zulueta, Philippine Daily Inquirer
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Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7	
Ali 1	AB NORMAL
Ali 2	AMAZON
Ali 3	SHANGHAI KNIGHTS
Ali 4	DAREDEVIL
Ali 5	DAREDEVIL
Ali 6	THEY
Ali 7	ABANDON
FARMERS PLAZA CINEMAS	
Farmers 1	TOMAGAN
Farmers 2	DAREDEVIL
ARANETA COLISEUM	
FEB 21 & 22	MARTIN & POPS CONCERT
FEB 23	PBA OPENING GAMES
MARCH 1	JOLINA MANIA CONCERT
ELEPHANT WORLD	
FEB 21	10 AM / 3 PM
FEB 22	10 AM / 3 PM / 5 PM
FEB 23	3 PM / 5 PM

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	KAPAG BUMAYO PALAY / UNFAITHFUL CONCUBINE
ODEON	DAREDEVIL
ODEON-2	MALDITA / STRIP SHOW
ROBEN	BUKANG BIBIG
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	HALLOWEEN / ONE WRONG TURN
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	TOMAGAN
CORONET B	CHANGING LANES / THE WILD SIDE
QUEZON-1	BUKANG BIBIG
REMAR	DAREDEVIL
REMAR-2	BUKANG BIBIG
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
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B	SHANGHAI KNIGHTS
C	
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SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
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CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-6401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	TOMAGAN
CINEMA-2	SUKDULAN
CINEMA-3	MAGNIFICO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	DAREDEVIL
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	HERO
CINEMA-6	BUKANG BIBIG
CINEMA-7	AB NORMAL COLLEGE
CINEMA-8	TWO WEEKS NOTICE
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	DEREDEVIL
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	DAREDEVIL
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	SHANGHAI KNIGHTS
CINEMA-12	ABANDON
CINEMA-14	AMAZON
CINEMA-15	THEY
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
CINEMA 1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA 2	BAHID
CINEMA 3	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA 4	CHANGING LNES
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
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BUSINESS

Editor **Raul O. Marcelo** ● Assistant Editor **Corrie S. Narisma**

Treasury shelves auctions; peso rises

By Clarissa S. Batino and Doris C. Dumlao

THE BUREAU of Treasury has shelved the auction of P3.5 billion worth of five-year bonds next week and deferred indefinitely the sale of P5 billion in dollar-linked notes that the market had been clamoring for to protect their peso investments.

The peso continued to weaken early yesterday, dropping to 54.35 to $1 in morning trading, but closed higher at 54.25 from 54.295 Wednesday.

The black market, however, continued to change dollars at 54.75 to a dollar, or a spread of about 40 centavos, following the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas's two-week-old notice to banks not to hoard dollars and to fully document transactions worth $5,000 and above.

Traders said that those without proper documentation source their dollar requirements from the black market.

National Treasurer Sergio Edeza, who earlier warned the market not to engage him in a game of brinkmanship, made true his threat Tuesday to start canceling auctions owing to the persistence of banks to drive local rates up.

Bond auctions normally done during Tuesdays would have been moved to Wednesday due to an Edsa celebration on the 25th. Edeza had signed a memorandum canceling the treasury bond sale next week. The government was scheduled to sell another batch of P5 billion in dollar-linked bonds late this month.

Edeza said it did not make sense for the government to issue more dollar-linked bonds as the exchange rate continued to be volatile.

"The market had been misbehaving and so will we. The market knows me well enough to know that when I say something, I mean it," he said.

Meantime, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri yesterday projected that the peso could bounce back to the 53 level against the US dollar as soon as international concerns on the Philippine anti-money laundering law are resolved.

EDEZA

Neri told reporters at the sidelines of a Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industries forum that impending sanctions from Paris-based Financial Action Task Force against money laundering were now causing more jitters to the financial markets than the heightened tension in the Middle East.

The FATF gave the Philippines until March 15 to pass the required amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001, which was deemed as insufficient to curb the flow of dirty money.

"Maybe the peso will recover to 53 once the issue is resolved," Neri said.

He said the weakness of the local currency, which was now trading above P54 to $1, was largely due to concerns about the Amla rather than the threats of a US-led war against Iraq.

"The market has gotten used to dealing with the Middle East crisis," Neri said.

"The sooner this is resolved, the better for us," Neri said. "This (Amla issue) has raised the level of anxiety. It has put an air of nervousness, something we don't need at this point. We don't want want to pile risk factors to another."

Neri noted that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas was closely watching the foreign exchange market and would intervene only if there were speculative attacks against the peso.

SSS okays sale, restructuring of ₱27B in mortgages

By Elena R. Torrijos

THE SOCIAL Security System board has approved the sale, restructuring or securitization of P27 billion in mortgages as proposed by the Ernst & Young Punongbayan & Araullo group.

The P27 billion is part of the P38 billion in mortgages under the Unified Home Lending Program managed by state-owned National Home Mortgage and Finance Corp.

NHMFC earlier tapped the EY/PA group to prepare a plan on how to dispose of the mortgages and to help secure the approval of the mortgage lenders, namely SSS, Government Service Insurance System and the Home Development Mutual Fund or Pag-IBIG, to the plan.

An INQUIRER source said that under the plan, "highly delinquent" housing loans amounting to P14.7 billion of the P38 billion would be sold through an "open competitive bidding."

The state-controlled SSS accounts for P11.7 billion of the outstanding principal balance of this type of loans.

Another P12.2 billion in "moderately delinquent" loans would be restructured or placed under an aggressive collection system.

The remaining P11.8 billion in "low delinquent" housing loans would be securitized after the proposed securitization bill has been enacted.

The source said that the SSS approval paves the way for the bidding of the P14.7 billion in highly delinquent housing loans by June or July this year.

Proceeds of the sale is seen to allow SSS to earn higher returns on its funds.

The HDMF or Pag-IBIG, which accounts for P4.5 billion of the UHLP portfolio, is seen to grant its approval to the EY/PA proposal in the first week of March.

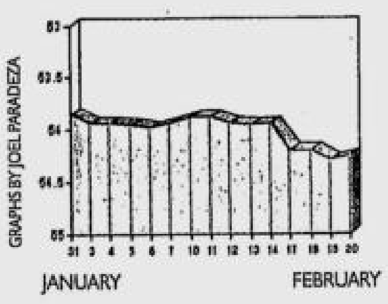
GSIS, which is also controlled by the government, has rejected the proposal, deciding that it was better off collecting its P6-billion share of the UHLP on its own.

Many foreign groups have expressed keen interest in bidding for its P14.7-billion highly delinquent mortgage portfolio. These included Cerberus, Lone Star, Goldman Sachs, Lehmann Brothers, etc.

The entire P38-billion UHLP portfolio covers 195,000 mortgages.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P P54.25 $1

As of 5 p.m., Feb.20, 2003

¥ 118.92 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Feb. 20, 2003

GOLD: $352.50-353.00

per ounce Hong Kong, Feb.20, 2003

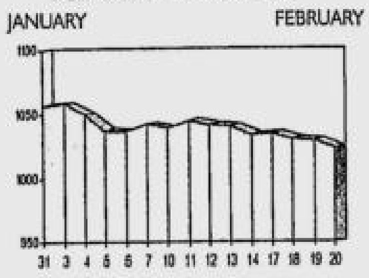
STOCK MARKET

Stocks drop on peso, sanction fears

STOCKS dropped for the third straight session yesterday as concerns over a weaker peso, a potentially higher-than-expected January budget deficit and the threat of money-laundering sanctions hit confidence.

The main index ended 6.07 points or 0.59 percent lower at 1,023.23. It has lost 1.63 percent this week but is up a slim 0.47 percent since the start of the year.

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Turnover rose slightly to P134.88 million from Wednesday's P120.73 million. Losers beat gainers 19 to 15 and there were 46 stocks unchanged.

"The peso was a major concern. Its weakness was due to worries that the country might face sanctions if it fails to meet standards set by the international community," said AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan. "If we face sanctions, the flow of dollars will slow down."

The Paris-based Financial Action Task Force has given the Philippines until March 15 to strengthen its dirty-money law or face sanctions that would put nearly all transactions with overseas financial institutions under scrutiny.

The sanctions would slow trade and the flow of money—worth a

STOCKS/B5

Favila to head PDIC

BANKER Peter Favila is being tapped to head the state-owned Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.

PDIC executive vice president Rose Casiguran has been the officer in charge since Norberto Nazareno relinquished his post late last year. Nazareno retained a seat in the PDIC board as well as in Philippine National Bank.

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TOURISM ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO: 03-01

RULES AND REGULATIONS IMPLEMENTING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9174, AN ACT AMENDING THE BALIKBAYAN PROGRAM R.A. 6768

Pursuant to Section 8 of Republic Act 9174, the following Rules and Regulations of the Balikbayan Program are hereby promulgated for the effective implementation thereof.

Rule I. COVERAGE

These rules and regulations shall govern the benefits enumerated under Republic Act No. 9174.

Rule II. DEFINITION OF TERMS – For the purpose of this Act:

1. The term "balikbayan" shall mean:
   - a. Filipino citizen who has been continuously out of the Philippines for a period of at least one (1) year from the date of last departure;
   - b. A Filipino overseas worker; or
   - c. a former Filipino citizen and his or her family, as this term is defined hereunder, who had been naturalized in a foreign country and comes or returns to the Philippines.

The term "***family***" shall mean the spouse and the children of the balikbayan who are not balikbayans in their own right traveling with the latter to the Philippines.

The term "***minor***" shall mean an individual whose age does not exceed 18 years old.

2. The term "livelihood tools" shall mean:
   - a. instruments used by hand or by machine necessary to a person in the practice of his or her trade, vocation or profession, such as hand tools, power tools, precision tools, farm tools, tools for dressmaking, shoe repair, beauty parlor, barber shop and the like, as may be determined by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), for purposes of application or use in a livelihood undertaking.
   - b. A computer unit and its accessories.

Rule III. DETERMINATION OF THE BALIKBAYAN STATUS

The following are the BALIKBAYAN CATEGORIES:

- a. Filipino citizen who has been continuously out of the Philippines for a period of at least one (1) year from the date of last departure;
- b. A Filipino overseas worker; or
- c. Former Filipino with foreign passport and members of his or her family, meaning the spouse and children of the balikbayan who are not balikbayans in their own right but who are traveling with the balikbayan.

In the availment of incentives from the agencies concerned, without prejudice to the requirements for travel tax exemption as provided under existing laws, the following documents are to be presented to show proof of their balikbayan status:

- a. Filipino citizen who has been continuously out of the country
  - 1. Philippine passport showing date of last departure
- b. Filipino overseas worker:
  - 1. Passport and any of the following:
    - POEA approved contract of employment
    - Certificate/Contract of employment by the foreign employer
    - Certificate of employment by the Philippine Embassy/ Consulate
    - Contract Worker stamp on passport
    - Seaman's Service Record Book
    - E- Card (OFW Electronic Identification Card)
- c. Foreign passport holder:
  - 1. Passport and any of the following:
    - Old Philippine passport
    - Foreign, naturalization papers to show former Philippine citizenship
    - Certification issued by the embassy or consulate of adoptive country that the individual is a former Filipino citizen
- d. Family members of the Balikbayan who are travelling with the balikbayan should present
  - 1. Passport and any of the following:
    - Birth Certificate in case of children
    - Marriage Certificate in case of spouse
    - Adoption papers (proof of adoption) in case of legally adopted children.

Rule IV. BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE BALIKBAYAN

Eligible participants in the program shall be entitled to the duty and tax-free maximum purchase of goods at Philippine duty-free shops operated by Duty Free Philippines pursuant to Executive Order No. 46 Section 86, in the amount of One Thousand Five Hundred United States Dollars (US$1,500) or its equivalent in Philippine Peso and other acceptable foreign currencies subject to the following limitations:

- a. Purchases shall be made in US dollars or its equivalent in Philippine Peso and other acceptable foreign currencies based on the list of acceptable foreign currencies provided by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.
- b. The balikbayan shopping privilege provided for herein shall be subject to the following conditions:
  - b.1 Purchases shall be made within fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of arrival;
  - b.2 During the Christmas Season, reckoned from November 15 to January 15, the privilege is extended to thirty (30) calendar days from the date of arrival;
  - b.3 The privilege shall be availed of on a one-time shopping basis only;
  - b.4 In the case of senior citizens and handicapped balikbayan, they shall be allowed to enjoy the privilege within one (1) year from date of arrival in the country.
- c. The privilege is non-transferable, hence purchases shall be made personally by the balikbayan, except under the following circumstances:
  - c.1 That a balikbayan who has gone back abroad may still avail of the *Kabuhayan shopping* privilege provided for herein within a maximum period of one (1) year from date of arrival in the country, and that immediate family members of the balikbayan shall be allowed to claim the *kabuhayan* tools purchased.
  - c.2 That an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW), duly certified as such by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), Overseas Worker Welfare Administration (OWWA), Philippine Overseas Labor Officer or by the embassy/consulate of the Philippines in the country where he or she had been deployed, taking into consideration the evidence of remittance, may opt to endorse in writing the kabuhayan shopping privilege to his or her immediate family members within the second degree or consanguinity or affinity residing in the Philippines once within two (2) years from the date of effectivity of his or her contract and only during the duration of the same.
- d. The privilege may only be availed of by a balikbayan only once a year;
- e. Only a balikbayan of majority age under Philippine laws can enjoy the privilege: Provided, however, that family members who are minors shall continue to be entitled to purchase privilege not exceeding the allowable duty and tax-exempt limit for arriving passengers provided for under Customs Administrative Order No. 4-92; and
- f. In addition to existing limitations on the number of consumables purchased such as, two (2) reams of cigarettes of any brand, two (2) bottles of wine and/or liquor of any brand as provided for under Customs Administrative Order No. 4-92, a balikbayan shall be entitled to buy only one (1) item of every product category of consumer durables the selling price of which exceeds two hundred United States dollar (US$200.00). Attached herewith is a partial List of Consumer Durables whose selling price of which may exceed two hundred United States dollars (US$200.00)

For the effective implementation of the above limitations, the availment of duty and tax-free shopping privilege by the balikbayan shall be personal in nature. Purchases jointly made by the balikbayan family shall be considered on an individual basis for purposes of the limitation on value of purchase provided for under this Administrative Order.

Rule V. OTHER BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES

In addition to the duty and tax-free purchases of goods at Philippine duty free shops operated by Duty Free Philippines pursuant to Executive Order No. 46 Section 86, a balikbayan and his or her family shall be entitled to the following:

- a. A special promotional/incentive program for the *balikbayan* established by all all domestic carriers pursuant to the provision of Republic Act No. 9174;
- b. Visa-free entry to the Philippines for a maximum stay of one (1) year for foreign passport holders, with the exception of restricted nationals, subject to such fees and the rules and regulations of the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation;
- c. Travel tax exemption to a qualified balikbayan pursuant to the provisions of Presidential Decree. No. 1183, Executive Order No. 283, and other related laws;
- d. Availment of especially designated reception areas at the authorized ports of entry for the expeditious processing of documents;
- e. Use of accredited transportation facilities that will ensure their safe and convenient trips upon arrival. and,
- f. Kabuhayan shopping privilege, through an additional duty and tax-exempt purchase in the amount of **TWO THOUSAND UNITED STATES DOLLARS (US$2,000.00)** or its equivalent Philippine Peso and other acceptable foreign currencies, exclusively for the purchase of livelihood tools at government-owned and controlled/operated Duty-Free Shops.

The total amount of duty and tax-exempt maximum purchase as mentioned in Rule IV and sub-paragraph F of this Rule may be used for the kabuhayan shopping program, subject to the limitations imposed on the balikbayan under these rules and regulations.

Rule VI. MONITORING SYSTEM

To monitor the purchase period limit in Rule IV, item b hereof, as well as the maximum allowable purchase provided for herein, the following control system is hereby implemented in coordination with the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation, to wit:

1. Balikbayan Shopping:
   - a. A balikbayan shopping card shall be issued by the Duty Free Philippines' representative only after confirmation of the buyer's Balikbayan status, and subject to further check at random by the Bureau of Customs' representative as to its veracity.
   - b. The passport of the balikbayan shall be stamped with a balikbayan identifying mark by the Duty Free Philippines' representative after confirmation of his balikbayan status.
   - c. The shopping card shall indicate the date of purchase, value of purchase for both consumables and non-consumables and quantity of non-consumables purchased.
2. Kabuhayan Shopping:
   - 2.1 Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW)
     - a. Upon registration at the DFP Customer Relations & Registration (CRR) Counter, the OFW shall be asked to present his passport or seaman's book (whichever is applicable) on which the CRR Representative will check for the following:
       - POEA sticker
       - Last departure date
       - Arrival date
       - OFW E-Card

       Confirmation by the CRR Representative of the above information shall automatically entitle the eligible balikbayan OFW to an additional **TWO THOUSAND US STATES DOLLARS (US$2,000.00)** worth of livelihood shopping privilege.
     - b. The passport (or seaman's book) of the balikbayan shall be marked by the Duty Free Philippines' representative after confirmation of his balikbayan status.
     - c. The shopping card, which will reflect a shopping limit of **FOUR THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS ($4,500.00)**, shall indicate the date of purchase, value of purchase for both consumables and non-consumables and quantity of non-consumables purchased.
   - 2.2 Non-Overseas Filipino Worker (Non-OFW)
     - a. Upon registration at the DFP Customer Relations & Registration (CRR) Counter, the NON-OFW shall be asked to present his or her passport on which the CRR Representative will check for the following:
       - Last departure date
       - Arrival date
     - b. The passport of the balikbayan shall be marked by the Duty Free Philippines' representative after confirmation of his balikbayan status.
     - c. The shopping card, which will reflect a shopping limit of **FOUR THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS ($4,500.00)**, shall indicate the date of purchase, value of purchase for both consumables and non-consumables and quantity of non-consumables purchased.
   - 2.3 Retirees
     - a. Upon registration at the DFP Customer Relations & Registration (CRR) Counter, the NON-OFW shall be asked to present his passport.
     - b. The passport of the balikbayan shall be marked by the Duty Free Philippines' representative after confirmation of his balikbayan status.
     - c. The shopping card, which will reflect a shopping limit of **FOUR THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS ($4,500.00)**, shall indicate the date of purchase, value of purchase for both consumables and non-consumables and quantity of non-consumables purchased.
3. Absentee-Shopping under Kabuhayan Program:
   - a. Approval and Endorsement of Waiver Form
     - a.1 Upon registration at the DFP counter for OFW Balikbayans, the arriving contract worker shall secure a waiver form (one copy) from the OWWA representative and completely accomplish the form. This waiver form shall signify his consent in assigning his livelihood shopping privilege to any of his immediate family as defined in Rule IV (c.2) of this Administrative Order.

       The OFW worker should indicate the complete name of the family member whom he has authorized to exercise the shopping privilege.
     - a.2 Once completely accomplished, the OFW shall submit the form to the OWWA representative for validation.
     - a.3 Once the information has been validated by examining the passport, E-Card and employment contract, the OWWA representative shall sign on the waiver form, indicating approval or authenticity of the data on the form.
     - a.4 The OFW worker shall then turn over the waiver form to the family member whom he has indicated as his authorized representative.
   - b. Shopping Procedures for the Authorized Family Member
     - b.1 The authorized family member shall proceed to the Customer Relations Counter and present the accomplished and signed waiver form together with his/her ID to the Customer Relations & Registration (CRR) Representative.
     - b.2 Upon checking of the OWWA's endorsement on the waiver form by the Bureau of Customs (BOC), the CRR Representative shall issue a shopping card.
     - b.3 The attending CRR Representative shall then mark the passport "B", which stands for Balikbayan, to indicate that the absentee shopping privilege for livelihood items have been availed of.

Rule VII. PHILIPPINE-MADE PRODUCTS IN DUTY-FREE SHOPS

To effectively showcase Philippine culture, craftsmanship and industry, all government-owned and controlled/operated duty free shops, in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry, shall ensure at all times that a minimum of ten percent (10%) of the goods being sold by them shall, as far as practicable, whether by direct purchase or concession, be sourced from Philippine-based manufacturers of prominence taking into consideration that in the selection of said goods, factors such as competitiveness, design, excellence, marketability, regional representation and world-class appeal are considered.

Rule VIII. TRAINING PROGRAMS

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), through the OWWA, in coordination with the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Livelihood Corporation and other concerned government agencies, shall provide the necessary entrepreneurial training and livelihood skills programs and marketing assistance to a balikbayan, including his or her immediate family members, who shall avail of the kabuhayan shopping privilege in line with the existing rules on the government's re-integration program.

In the case of non-OFW balikbayan, the Department of Tourism (DOT) shall make the necessary arrangements with the TLRC and other training institutions for possible livelihood training.

Rule IX. SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT OF SALES

The Department of Tourism shall submit semi-annual reports to the President through the Secretary of Finance and to both Houses of Congress containing statement of the quantities and the value of the goods sold by the Government-Owned and Controlled/Operated DUTY-FREE SHOPS, in accordance with the classification categories in the Tariff and Customs code of the Philippines, as amended.

Rule X. REPEALING CLAUSE

All rules and regulations inconsistent with these rules are repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

Rule XI. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

The provisions of this Administrative Order are hereby declared separable, and in the event that any of such provisions is declared invalid, the validity of all other provisions shall not be affected thereby.

Rule XII. ISSUANCE OF ADDITIONAL RULES

The Department of Tourism shall, in coordination with other concerned government agencies, whenever necessary or as the need arises, issue from time to time additional rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the Balikbayan Program as instituted by Republic Act 9174.

Rule XIII. EFFECTIVITY

This Administrative Order shall take effect immediately after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

03 January 2003, Manila, Philippines.

RICHARD J. GORDON
Secretary
Department of Tourism

ADVT.

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Dole out

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

DOLE Philippines has lost a key labor case involving the grant of meal allowance to thousands of its plantation workers, a case that the American multinational fought from the labor department all the way up to the Supreme Court.

The setback would mean that Dole has no choice but to pay, according to an initial estimate, an accumulated P400 million worth of unpaid meal allowances since 1996.

(No ranking Dole official could be reached for comment as of press time.)

Dole had maintained that the 1996-2001 collective bargaining agreement provided for a P25 meal allowance for every worker only "after three hours of actual overtime work."

But the high court, noting the previous Dole CBAs, ruled that the phrase had actually been interpreted to mean "after rendering exactly, or no less than, three hours" of actual overtime work.

Dole and its labor union, representing the plantation workers in Polomolok, South Cotabato, earlier agreed to submit the question to the National Conciliation and Mediation Board after Dole limited the coverage of the free meal allowance.

Dole lost in the arbitration proceedings but subsequently appealed to the Court of Appeals, only to lose again.

It is not immediately clear if Dole would still appeal the decision, handed down last month by the Supreme Court Third Division, with Associate Justice Renato Corona as ponente.

Joey is not joking

AFTER auctioning off the international airport for long unpaid real estate taxes, the comedian mayor of Parañaque is now seriously going after the next biggest tax dodger of his city, ex-Mayor Pablo Olivares.

According to City Hall's calculations, the ex-mayor's unpaid and accumulated tax bill on his substantial real estate holdings now amount to more than P60 million. It also helps that Olivares is a political opponent of Marquez.

City Hall has already set the confiscation bidding for the pieces of Olivares property on March 3.

Earlier, the Wenceslao Group of companies coughed up P198 million in back taxes and penalties after noting that Marquez was serious in placing their property on the auction block, just what Marquez did with the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

OutSmarting competition

SMART Phone, Smart's PDA-phone due for launching next month, would be sold depending on the subscription plan, at P20,000-P25,000 per unit.

This is a substantial discount against the P35,000 range that Ericsson is retailing its trailblazing P800, which the Smart Phone is positioned with.

Jancom suit junked

THE nuisance suit filed by Jancom International of Australia against the real Jancom has been dismissed by the Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Sixto Marella.

Incidentally, the real Jancom, with Leonides Gonzalez as chair and Alfonso Tuzon as president, has sewn up an agreement with Mayor Joey Marquez for Parañaque to

COCKTALES/ B5

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VARIABLE LIFE	Current Week February 18, 2003	Last Week February 11, 2003
Prulink Bond Fund	1.03982	1.03930
Prulink Managed Fund	1.01124	1.01297

* Note PRULINK Funds were launched last September 18 2002

GROWTH WITH EQUITY IN MINDANAO (GEM) PROGRAM
A Project of the United States Agency for International Development
The General Contractor is THE LOUIS BERGER GROUP, INC.
Tel: (6382) 225-1596 • Fax: (6382) 225-1479
USAID Contract No: 492-C-00-02-00018-00

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY TO BID

1. The Philippines has received a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to fund the cost of the Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program (the Project). A portion of the proceeds of this grant will be used for the construction of Mid-Scale Infrastructure Program (MSIP) subprojects for which this invitation for Prequalification is being issued. The GEM Project Management Office based in Davao City will implement these subprojects.
2. In relation to these construction implementation activities, different engineering studies need to be conducted. This invitation seeks contractors who can provide the following services:
   A. Topographic Surveys B. Hydrographic Surveys C. Geotechnical Investigations
3. Interested contractors are invited to prequalify and bid on the conduct of engineering studies for the two projects named below:
   A. Rehabilitation and Improvement of the Port of Bongao in Tawi-tawi Province.
   B. Rehabilitation and Improvement of the Port of Maluso in Basilan Province.
4. Prequalification and bidding is open to licensed/registered firms (applicable to type of study and registered through SEC for corporations or DTI for entrepreneurs) from the Philippines. Applications may be made for one or more of the required studies above for groups /consortium or large companies with varied specializations and services.
5. Only the bids of contractors who have been prequalified for the GEM works will be considered. After all the bids from the prequalified contractors are evaluated, the contract will be awarded to the company submitting the lowest responsive bid.
6. The required prequalification documents must be submitted in a sealed envelope, while the bid must be submitted in a separate sealed envelope. Both envelopes must have clear markings containing the name of the company submitting the bid and the contents of both envelopes. The requirements for qualification are (these documents could be bound into a single volume for ease of submission):
   i. Company Profile containing:
      - Start of operations of the company and short company profile or company description;
      - Certificate of Registration (SEC for Corporations and DTI for Entrepreneurs);
      - Projects completed including contract amount, duration of contract, date of project completion and project owner;
      - Certificate of completion from the project owner for five of the biggest projects completed by the firm; and
      - List of equipment owned by the company
   ii. Brief CVs of Chief Technical Officer and 1 other Technical Officer in the Company (e.g Chief Geotechnical Engineer for Geotechnical Companies)
   iii. Other Company qualifications such as but not limited to the following: membership in local/international professional organizations related to the services of the company, special company services, and other special qualifications or experience limited to 5 examples.
   iv. Bids must include details of the scope of work, mobilization costs, units used in the costing, costs of special equipment to be used, personnel costs, transportation costs and other costs related to the services to be provided.
7. Eligible applicants may obtain the profile of the two above-enumerated projects as well as terms of reference for the conduct of the studies at the following locations:
   i. Project Management Office, Growth with Equity in Mindanao Program
   2nd Floor, Ladislawa Building, No.1 Ladislawa Avenue, Buhangin, Davao City, 8000
   ii. GEM Cotabato City Area Office, 4/F Elena V. Co Bldg., Don Rufino Alonzo St., Cotabato City 9600
   iii. GEM Zamboanga City Area Office, 4/F VH Wee Building, Veterans Ave., Zamboanga City, 7000
   iv. These documents are also available at the Head Office of The Louis Berger Group Phils., Inc.
   Unit 3, 12/F, ExportBank Plaza, Sen. Gil Puyat corner Chino Roces Avenues, Makati City 1200
8. These documents will be available up to 28 February 2003 only. Deadline for submission of prequalification documents and sealed bids is on 07 March 2003, thru mail or delivery to the GEM Project Management Office.
9. In cases where a company will bid on two or all of the required studies, clear delineation on the company profile and sealed bids must be made on the type of engineering study.
10. GEM reserves the right to accept or reject late applications.
11. GEM will advise the applicants of the results of their application in due course.

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THE PULSE OF BUSINESS

Palace OKs transfer of Centennial Corp. to CDC

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has given the green light to Clark Development Corp. to take over the multibillion-peso First Centennial Clark Corp. (FCCC) from the National Development Co. (NDC).

Trade and Industry Secretary and NDC Chair Manuel A. Roxas II said the President issued Administrative Order No. 63 to effect the transfer of FCCC's assets and receivables to CDC.

Roxas said the transfer should pave the way for the restructuring of NDC which has P2.34 billion in investments and receivables and P1.29 billion in loans and interest in FCCC as of end-2002.

Roxas said NDC borrowed P977 million from the Social Security System, Land Bank of the Philippines and Government Service Insurance System. The loans were guaranteed by the Philippine government and a deed of assignment covering revenues from the project.

FCCC is a 60-40 joint venture between NDC and Asian Construction Development Corp. (Asiakonstrukt) formed in 1997 to bankroll and manage the Philippine Centennial Exposition or Expo Filipino inside the Clark Special Economic Zone. The NDC was forced to take over 60 percent of FCCC after businesswoman Nora Bitong's company, Expocorp, pulled out of the project because of differences with government proponents.

The 60-hectare Expo Filipino theme park has been wasting away since President Estrada ordered its closure in 1999.

Roxas had pushed to get FCCC out of NDC's hands because its interest expenses and maintenance costs have become too much of a financial burden for the agency. Roxas said it also had distracted NDC from undertaking other investment projects. Roxas felt that CDC was in a better to position to lead the recovery of FCCC because the project was inside its turf.

CDC had earlier reported that it was keen on converting Expo Filipino into a world-class film studio and theme park by attracting top-notch Hollywood and Philippine movie moguls to the site.

Good news and bad news in Philippine agriculture sector

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

COMMENTARY

"LEAVE the village, but not agriculture." This old Chinese adage points in the right direction. Proceed to industry and services, but do not forget the base that is agriculture.

In the Philippines today, people are leaving the village to migrate to the cities. However, this is not so much because they are pulled to the urban areas to add value to what should be a strong agricultural base. It is really because they are pushed out of agriculture in the village because of little opportunity and growth. They then find out there is also little hope in the cities. Many end up jobless and become squatters. We have an overall weak economy, ironically because the agriculture base in the village was not supported properly in the first place.

Has agriculture floundered that badly? There is bad news and good news.

Annual growth

The bad news is that in the 1990s, our population grew by 2.4 percent yearly but annual agriculture growth averaged at only 2.1 percent. Since our food availability grew slower than the number of mouths to feed, malnutrition got progressively worse.

The good news is that in the first three years of this decade, our agriculture grew faster than our population. Growth was 3.6 percent in 2000, 4.0 percent in 2001, and, despite a long dry spell in critical rice areas, 3.5 percent in 2002. The average annual agriculture growth of 3.7 percent in those three years was faster than the 2.4 percent expansion of the population.

But this is not good enough. The low agriculture growth in the '90s left us too far behind. New challenges have come up because of globalization. Poverty in the rural areas is rampant. Jobs are getting lost, partly because of extremely rapid reduction in tariff rates. Many of these rates are much lower than those allowed by GATT-WTO. This happens at a time when the promised safety nets such as irrigation, post harvest facilities and technology transfer have not been delivered. The rampant smuggling in Metro Manila, which at one time showed 40 out of 100 container vans containing smuggled goods, has significantly decreased but some of the smuggling operations were just diverted to other ports in the Philippines. Outside Metro Manila, the effective anti-smuggling measures of the Bureau of Customs, the Department of Agriculture, the Presidential Security Group and the farmer groups have not yet been replicated.

In the midst of all this, how is agriculture being helped today? Let us look at the support given by three government funding sources: The Department of Agriculture's budget, the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund and the Land Bank of the Philippines. There is good news and bad news.

DA budget

The good news is that the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (Afma) was approved by Congress in 1997. It stipulated that there should be P20 billion in funds to be given to agriculture in the first year of its implementation, and P17 billion in the next six years in addition to the regular DA budget. According to Afma's Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), at least P17 billion should be added to the 1998 DA budget of P15.6 billion, to bring the total to P32.6 billion.

The bad news is that the DA budget does not reflect this amount. It averaged only P17.5 billion from 1998 to 2002, or approximately one half of the targeted amount. Worse, the actual allotment given to DA averaged only P14.1 billion annually, or P3.4 billion less than what was authorized by Congress.

Part of the reason for this was that a different interpretation of the law was adopted. If a fund source financed an Afma category, it was considered fulfilling the Afma mandate. For example, as per Afma, the marketing services category which is so important to agriculture should get P1.2 billion yearly. However, the actual budget given to the DA Agriculture Marketing Assistance Service for 2002 was only P101 million, or 6 percent of what the law specified. This was explained by saying that the balance was covered by loans extended by Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) to traders.

There are talks today that because of the budget deficit, the Senate might further cut the proposed meager 2003 DA budget of P18.9 billion. We hope this will not happen, considering the importance of the DA budget to agricultural development.

Competitiveness fund

The good news is that Afma has allocated a specific portion of the tariffs collected for sensitive agriculture products to the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (Acef). The cumulative amount has now reached P9.1 billion.

The bad news is that only P2.7 billion has actually been given to the DA. Of the amount, only P0.9B or one-third has been approved for loan release. Worse, only a small percentage of this amount has gone to small farmers and fisherfolk. This is far below the targeted level of 70 percent as approved at the socioeconomic summit held in December 2001.

The Acef funding should be properly allocated and significantly accelerated. It is suggested that at least one person with lending experience be in the Acef national technical committee. This will help ensure financial viability for these no-collateral and no-interest loans. The Acef's desire to pioneer in global competitiveness and to ensure that small farmers and fisherfolk benefit from it will be also be safeguarded. Financially non-viable ventures and traditional projects which regular banks normally finance anyway would not be considered prospective beneficiaries of this very special fund.

Landbank's share

The good news is that LBP released P110 billion in loans last year. Of this, 44 percent went to agriculture in 2002. This is a significant increase from 38 percent in 2001.

The bad news is that a 44-percent share given to agriculture by a bank set up primarily for this sector is inadequate. Of the total loan portfolio, only 11 percent went to LBP's primary clientele of small farmers and fisherfolk.

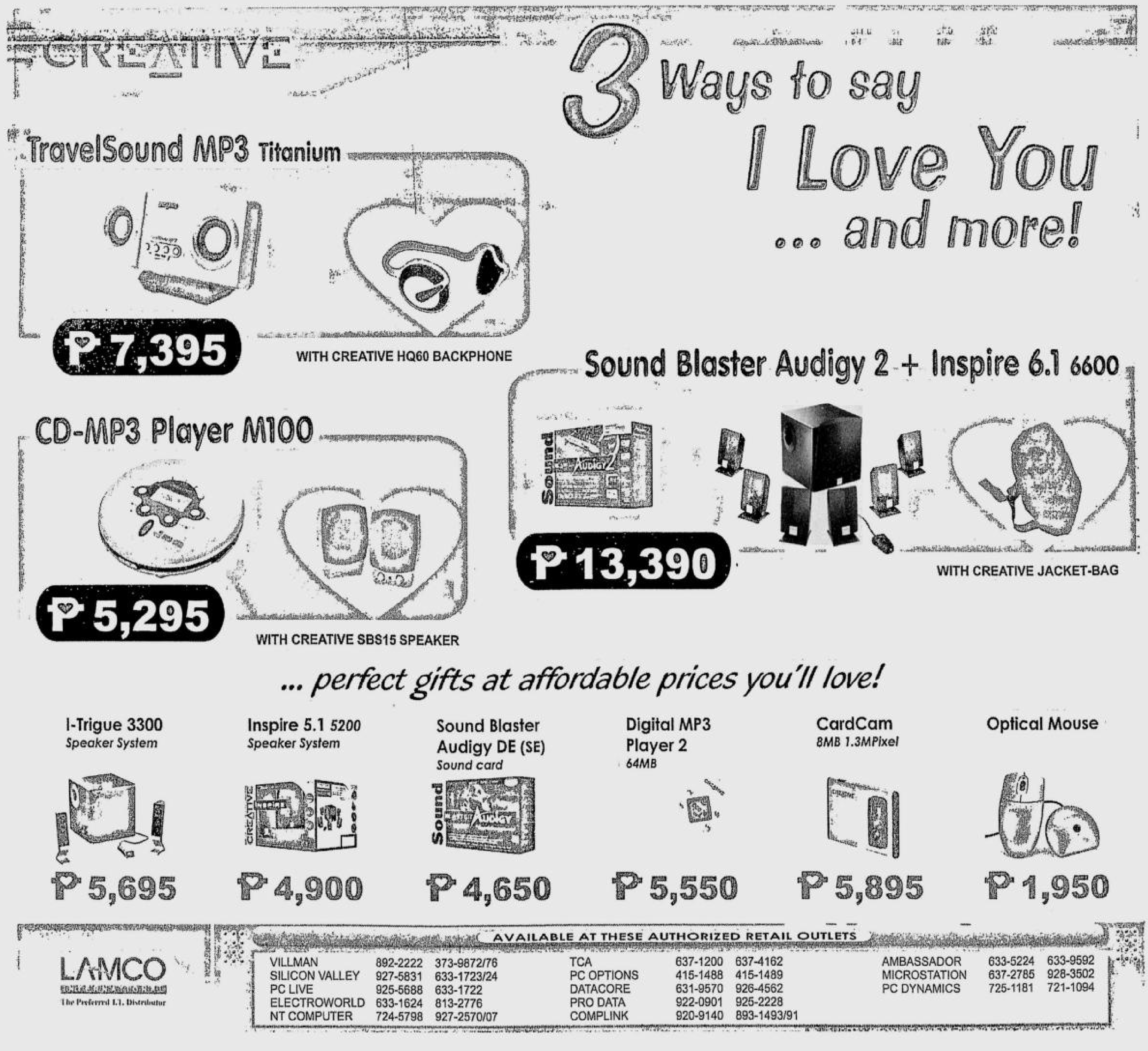
Today, LBP is an active partner of the NFA (National Food Authority) in helping farmers import approximately 400,000 metric tons of rice. NFA has a first-come, first-served policy, allowing a farmer cooperative to import up to a maximum of 10,000 metric tons a year worth approximately P135 million. Small farmer cooperatives do not have this huge amount of money. They are losing out to big traders. Reliable reports have reached us that some cooperatives are being used as fronts by these traders. What's worse, many of these farmers receive only a 10-percent share of the profit.

LBP can be more consistent with its small farmer mandate if it influences NFA to adopt another alternative. If it is a given that farmers, instead of the government, import the rice, an alternative proposed by farmer organizations is to decrease the maximum limit a cooperative may import from 10,000 tons to only 500 tons. This will then decrease the amount needed from P135 million to P6.75 million.

Conclusion

Referring to the old Chinese adage quoted earlier, leaving the village for industry and services can be done productively only if agriculture is not left behind. A step in this direction is to fill the gaps and "synergize" the potentials of the three funding sources cited earlier. It is every citizen's responsibility to watch what happens here so that bad news can be converted to good news. For it is agriculture, composed mostly of the small farmers and fisherfolk, that must get our support to become the necessary base and backbone for true economic development. As we leave the village, let us not forget agriculture.

(The author is chair of Agriwatch. For inquiries or suggestions, contact e-mail address agriwatchphil@yahoo.com. or Telefax No. 02-8516635)



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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Thursday, February 20, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	16	16.25	16	16.25	31,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	33	33	32.5	33	557,000
China Banking Corp.	640	680	640	650	11,370
Citystate Savings Bank	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	24.5	24.5	24.5	24.5	100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	28.5	28.5	27.5	27.5	57,700
Philippine National Bank	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	900
Union Bank of the Phil.	16.75	16.75	16.5	16.5	58,900
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Filipino Fund Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	70,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1300	1300	1300	1300	1,600
Sun Life Financial Serv.	960	960	960	960	2,850
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12	12	12	12	400
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.4	2,550,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	530	535	530	535	5,200
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	850,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	292.5	295	292.5	292.5	96,660
Ivantage Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	20,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	5,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	8.4	8.4	8.3	8.3	14,000
Manila Electric Co. B	12.25	12.5	12.25	12.5	284,300
Petron Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.68	1.68	1,572,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	30,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	400,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.36	2.36	2.36	2.36	4,000
Negros Navigation Co. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	20,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	470,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Jollibee Foods Corp.	16.25	16.25	16.25	16.25	12,800
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	2,200
RFM Corp.	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	50,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57.5	58	57.5	58	120,500
San Miguel Corp. B	65	65.5	65	65.5	355,800
Vitarich Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	100,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15	127,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.32	2.32	2.32	2.32	2,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	10,000
APC Group Inc.	0.04	0.045	0.04	0.045	800,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10	10	10	51,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	280,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	170,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	280,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	500,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	30,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4	5,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.14	1.14	1.12	1.12	590,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.42	0.45	0.42	0.45	80,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	10,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.135	0.14	0.13	0.13	780,000
Music Corp.	0.18	0.18	0.175	0.175	2,350,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.94	0.94	1,260,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	2.65	2.65	2.65	2.65	10,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	1,110,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
SPI Technologies Inc.	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	73,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	200,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	150,000
Manila Jockey Club	8	8	8	8	1,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	12	12	12	12	5,000
Jollibee Warrants	16	16	16	16	53,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series D	10	10	10	10	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10	10	10	10	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10	10	10	10	2,000
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10	10	10	10	1,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	16,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.75	4.75	4.7	4.7	3,331,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	50,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	100,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.12	0.12	250,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	220,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	1.94	1.94	1.94	1.94	100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	100,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.115	0.115	550,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	64,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.2	1,531,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	1,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0018	0.0018	0.0018	0.0018	11,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	410,000
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	0.0016	4,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0024	0.0024	0.0024	0.0024	1,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	1,000,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	10,000

DISCLOSURES

BENPRES Holdings Corp. will hold a special stockholders meeting on March 13, 9:30 a.m., at Studio 1 of ABS-CBN Broadcast Center, Quezon City. Only stockholders as of Feb. 19 are entitled to notice of and to vote during the meeting.

* * *

ALASKA Milk Corp. will hold its annual stockholders meeting on May 20, with record date on March 5.

* * *

CYBER Bay Corp. will hold its annual stockholders meeting on March 14, 3 p.m., at the Dusit Hotel Nikko. Only stockholders as of Feb. 20 are entitled to vote during the meeting.

* * *

SUN Life Financial Services of Canada Inc. has disclosed the resignation of Thomas Rice as vice president for investor relations. Thomas Reid was appointed vice president for investor relations and corporate development.

* * *

SEAFRONT Resources Corp. has announced the resignation of Porfirio de Guzman Jr. as treasurer and appointment of Susanne Santos as his replacement. Also, Milagros Reyes was appointed compliance officer. The company will hold its annual stockholders meeting on May 21, 2 p.m., at the RCBC Plaza in Makati.

* * *

FAR Eastern University has increased its authorized capital stock from P300 million to P1 billion and declared a 65-percent stock dividend out of this increase.

* * *

MANILA Jockey Club Inc. will hold its annual stockholders meeting on April 25, with record date on March 16. *Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa , PDI Research*

CURRENCIES

February 20, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	0.930146	1.000000	54.237000
Japan	Yen	0.007836	0.008424	0.456900
United Kingdom	Pound	1.485815	1.597400	86.638200
Hongkong	Dollar	0.119261	0.128218	6.954200
Switzerland	Franc	0.680080	0.731154	39.655600
Canada	Dollar	0.615257	0.661463	35.875800
Singapore	Dollar	0.531148	0.571037	30.971300
Australia	Dollar	0.552869	0.594389	32.237900
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.467296	2.652590	143.868500
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.248046	0.266674	14.463600
Brunei	Dollar	0.529635	0.569411	30.883100
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000105	0.000113	0.006100
Thailand	Baht	0.021629	0.023253	1.261200
UAE	Dirham	0.253267	0.272287	14.768000
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.075100	58.310200
ArgentinaPeso	0.292498	0.314465	17.055600	
Brazil	REAL	0.257944	0.277316	15.040800
Denmark	Kroner	0.134520	0.144622	7.843900
India	Rupee	0.019541	0.021008	1.139400
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.244808	0.263193	14.274800
Mexico	New Peso	0.085965	0.092421	5.012600
New Zealand	Dollar	0.514177	0.552792	29.981800
Norway	Kroner	0.132645	0.142607	7.734600
Pakistan	Rupee	0.016092	0.017301	0.938400
South Africa	Rand	0.112457	0.120903	6.557400
Korea	Won	0.000782	0.000841	0.045600
Sweden	Kroner	0.109696	0.117934	6.396400
Syria	Pound	0.022147	0.023810	1.291400
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.026875	0.028893	1.567100
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000583	0.000627	0.034000

Bad loans ratio at 15%

By Clarissa S. Batino

BANKS were saddled with fewer bad loans as of end-2002, with central bank sources saying the non-performing loans ratio had retreated to around 15 percent, the lowest in two years.

Persons familiar with the matter said the bad loans of more than 40 commercial banks dropped to below 16 percent of their total portfolios in December from 16.27 percent in November on aggressive restructuring and improved credits.

Central bank sources said the banking system had about P261 billion worth of bad loans as of end-2002 out of P1.628 billion lent.

"The NPL ratio has gone back to the 15-percent level, although it's on a high 15 percent for now. The ratio is true using both old and new computations," one source said.

Most commercial banks were able to trim their bad loans ratio starting September last year, when the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas allowed them to take out loans they had already written off.

The central bank estimates that about P30 billion worth of loans earlier classified as "bad" have already been written off.

The banking system's NPL ratio peaked at 18.81 percent in October 2001 from a single-digit level before the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.

Since then, banks have had to contend with a growing portfolio of soured accounts.

The quality of loans extended by banks worsened in 2000, when bad-loans ratios started hitting 15 percent and 16.26 percent later that year.

The ratio further deteriorated to 18 percent in August 2001, although it started to decline in June 2002.

Hold-departure vs Tibayan issued

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice has issued a hold-departure order against the incorporators of Tibayan Group Investment Co. Inc. following a request from the Securities and Exchange Commission's compliance and enforcement department.

Those ordered held were Jesus Tibayan, Palmy Tibayan, Ezekiel Martinez, Liborio Elacio, Jimmy Catigan and Rico Puerto.

The SEC asked the justice department to issue a hold-departure against these people, as their company was found to have committed investment fraud.

In issuing a hold-departure order, the DOJ said TGICI affirmed the SEC's findings that the Tibayan group of companies had solicited and accepted investments or placements from the public without getting the necessary license from the SEC.

It added that the issuance of a hold-departure order was to ensure that the incorporators of the company would not leave the country, while their case was being heard.

The incorporators of TGICI failed to show up during a hearing set on Tuesday.

Digitel to launch cell service in April

By Abigail L. Ho

AFTER a delay of almost two years, Digitel Mobile Philippines Inc. will finally go commercial in early April.

In an interview yesterday, Digitel Mobile chief executive Charles Lim said Digitel Mobile's "Sun Cellular" brand would charge rates lower than those of Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc., the country's top two mobile phone service providers.

Call rates within Digitel Mobile's network will be as low as P4 to P6 a minute, lower than the prevailing intra-network rates of around P5 to P8 a minute during peak hours.

Inter-operator call rates will range from P5 to P6.50 a minute for Sun Cellular, lower than Globe's and Smart's P6.50 to P8 a minute.

Text messages using Sun Cellular will cost 50 centavos to P1 each both within Digitel Mobile's network and to other cellular service providers.

Unlike its competitors, with the exception of Isla Communications Co. Inc.'s "Touch Mobile," Sun Cellular's call rates will not vary during peak and off-peak hours.

Megaworld earmarks P3.5B to cover capex

By Elena R. Torrijos

MEGAWORLD Corp. has set aside some P3.5 billion to cover its capital expenditures this year, 75 percent higher than last year's level.

"I think it is time to start expanding aggressively," Megaworld chair and chief executive Andrew Tan said in an interview Wednesday evening.

The money will go to finance various "pocket developments" in Metro Manila and the construction of a fourth tower of the firm's high-rise residential Forbes Woods project in Fort Bonifacio, Tan said.

It will also be used to build Megaworld's 11th or 12th residential building in its Eastwood City development in Libis, Quezon City, Tan said.

Tan expressed confidence that Megaworld would be able to post a 20-percent increase in consolidated profit this year compared to last year's level.

The company's 2002 profit, he said, was just almost the same or "very slightly better" than the 2001 profit of P408.36 million.

Stocks drop on peso, sanction fears

From page B1

record $7 billion last year—sent home by Filipinos working abroad.

Traders said market talk that the government overshot its deficit target of P16.8 billion in January also hurt the peso.

"The currency weakness raises concerns of foreign exchange risks for both the government and private sector given their dollar-denominated debts," Vistan said.

"The market might test the 1,010-psychological support level unless inspiring news come along." **Reuters**

Cocktales

From page B3

host a transfer station for the city's solid waste.

Jancom will build and operate the transfer station, and then haul the garbage to its landfill facility elsewhere at $10 per ton tipping fee.

Heard through the grapevine

FIL-ESTATE vice chair Noel "Toti" Carino has won by 1,365 votes in the recount of contested Pasig precincts over Rep. Henry Lanot.

Whether Carino can finally claim the Pasig congressional seat before the next election in 2004 is of course another question. *(Cocktales may be reached by e-mail at cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or at cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)*

NEWS BRIEFS

BDO investments

BANCO de Oro Universal Bank has invested some P25 million in a wholly owned subsidiary, BDO Realty Corp., which will manage P5.34 billion in real estate.

Banco de Oro senior vice president for investor relations Luis Reyes said the creation of the property management company "does not prevent us from exploring the SPV (special purpose vehicle) route." ***Elena R. Torrijos***

Maynilad extension

MAYNILAD Water Services Inc. is asking for another reprieve from its foreign creditors to pay back $100 million worth of loans due to mature this month.

Maynilad said it needed the extension, as it was facing a termination case before an international arbitration panel. ***Christine A. Gaylican***

Power supply deal

THE NATIONAL Power Corp. and Mirant Philippines Corp. have signed a three-year, power supply deal with the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority to lower the electric bills of locators in the former American naval base.

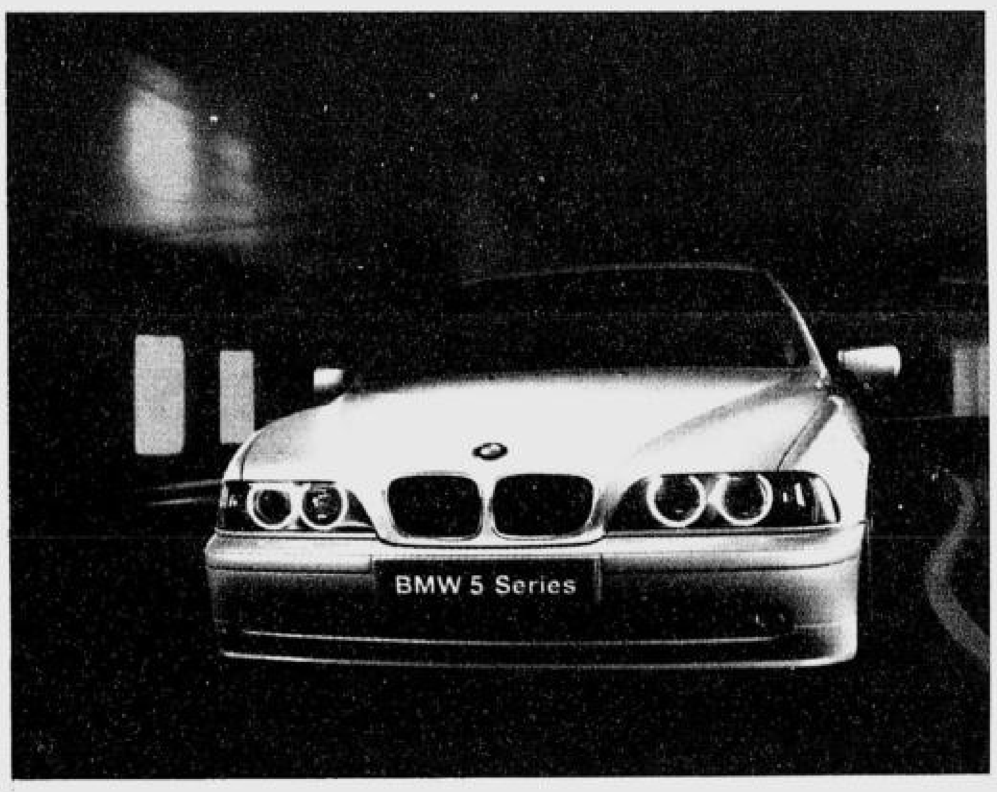
SBMA Chair Felicito Payumo said the deal would give manufacturing firms and tourism services in Subic the cheapest power rates in the country.

Allied acquisition

PAVING the way for its entry into "bancassurance," Allied Banking Corp. acquired yesterday an 8-percent stake in New York Life Insurance Philippines for P75 million.

The bank plans to eventually acquire 25 percent of the insurance firm.

The investment will allow Allied Bank to cross-sell insurance products through its 283 branches nationwide. ***Elena R. Torrijos***



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Lufthansa cuts flights

FRANKFURT—Deutsche Lufthansa AG said on Wednesday it was taking an additional 10 aircraft out of service, cutting investments, and adopting a hiring freeze to help it weather the weak global economy.

The cuts in investments will amount to 200 million euros ($214.9 million), the airline said, adding that additional measures would boost cash flow by about 100 million euros by the end of this year.

With Wednesday's announcement, the airline said a total of 31 planes operated by Lufthansa and 15 operated by subsidiary Lufthansa CityLine and other regional partners will be out of service within the coming weeks.

"The decline in business travelers and in average revenues in the passenger business since last fall have intensified even further at the beginning of the new year," Chief Executive Juergen Weber said in a statement.

Lufthansa said revenues in January were down year-on-year despite a rise in passengers and the price of crude oil was very high, making measures to protect earnings urgently necessary.

"The persisting adverse economic situation and the crisis in international air traffic have severely impaired our group's economic development," it said.

The airline has declined to give a firm outlook for the current year because of the weak economy and the possibility of war, though Chief Financial Officer Karl-Ludwig Kley said last month that 2003 would not be better than 2002.

Lufthansa has forecast an operating profit target of between 700 million and 750 million euros for 2002. *Reuters*

G7 to note slower global economic growth—Canada

OTTAWA—Finance ministers and central bankers from the world's seven top industrialized nations will note at a meeting in Paris this week that global economic growth will continue but on a slower path, a senior Canadian official said on Wednesday.

But the Group of Seven (G7) officials are not likely to discuss foreign exchange levels between their currencies or that of China's yuan, the official said in a briefing ahead of this weekend's G7 finance ministers' meeting.

Canadian Finance Minister John Manley, eight months at the helm of the G7's most robust economy, plans to press his counterparts to further liberalize world trade and push the Doha round of trade talks forward, the official said.

Eighty-five percent of Canada's exports are bound for the United States in what is the world's largest bilateral trading partnership.

Manley also plans a presentation on how to better handle sovereign debt restructurings, the official added.

Manley's discussion should address both the Sovereign Debt Restructuring Mechanism being drafted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and British legal rules, known as collective action clauses, that essentially restrain bondholders unless restructuring talks falter.

Finance ministers and central bankers from Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States meet in Paris on Friday and Saturday to assess the potential economic fallout from a war in Iraq and aid to developing nations, but will likely not include plans for co-ordinated government action to stimulate the world economy, G7 sources said. *Reuters*

CEOs see sluggish US growth

BOCA RATON—Chief executives at top US companies see America's economy growing in 2003 at the same anemic pace as last year, with business activity possibly picking up if global tensions and Iraq war fears ease.

In a survey released on Wednesday of the Business Council, a group of blue-chip corporate leaders, the executives were cautious about capital spending, which is widely seen as vital to getting the US economy on a solid footing.

"The vast majority of CEOs expect real GDP (gross domestic product) growth to be roughly similar to last year's 2.4-percent pace, with 72 percent saying growth will be moderate in 2003 (1.6 percent to 3 percent)," the council said in a summary of the survey sent to 180 active and former chief executives.

The executives said a resolution of world tensions over a possible invasion of Iraq would help US economic growth.

Forty percent reported that worries about an Iraqi war or terrorism had caused a delay or change in business plans for 2003.

Executives on the whole expected mild inflation, interest rates at or slightly above their current 40-year lows and a continued slide in the value of the US dollar. Only a small number predicted either recession or a big surge in economic growth.

"The government sector was expected to be the fastest growing part of the economy in 2003, by a significant margin, followed by consumer spending and housing," said the summary released at the Boca Raton Resort and Club in south Florida.

But the executives from the finance, construction, consumer products, retailing and other industries remained cautious about stepping up their own capital spending.

Forty-three percent had no plans to increase investments in plants and equipment, with the rest nearly equally divided between increasing or slowing such spending. In a similar survey last October, the vast majority of CEOs had expected capital spending to stabilize or decline in 2003.

Only 9 percent of the executives expected to step up hiring this year. Forty-six percent expected no change in hirings, while 45 percent were predicting a lower rate of hiring. In late 2002, about 40 percent of executives expected hiring to remain stable. *Reuters*

RILEY Bechtel (from right), CEO of Bechtel Group Inc., Business Council chair Chad Holliday, DuPont's chair and chief executive officer, and Fannie Mae CEO Frank Raines talk to the media Wednesday in Boca Raton, Fla. about their views on the economy. AP

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Multilateral trade key option for Asia, Singapore says

SINGAPORE—A multilateral trading system is the best option for Asia's export-driven economies and a successful World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Mexico will be crucial, a Singapore minister said Thursday.

"We need to ensure that global trade is based on a rule-based multilateral trading system where goods and services can flow freely with minimum impediment," said Minister of State for Trade and Industry Raymond Lim.

"To sum up, the WTO and the multilateral trading system is the best way forward for Singapore and for East Asia," Lim said in a keynote address on trade policy challenges facing the region.

With the global economy mired in a sluggish state and plagued by worries of a possible Middle East war, Lim said it was more important than ever that members of the international community work together to ensure success at the WTO ministerial meeting in the Mexican town of Cancun in September.

"After an initial recovery, the global economy appeared to have lost steam. Our economies need a collective boost to investment and consumption," Lim said.

"We have to galvanize one another to continue moving forward, and send a strong and positive message to the business community and the world at large," he said.

"It is imperative that Cancun succeeds, otherwise it will be a major setback for the whole Doha Development Agenda, and adds further gloom to global economic prospects, particularly for developing and least developed countries," Lim said.

The full ministerial meeting in Cancun is to serve as a review of the progress on the Doha round of trade negotiations started in the Qatari capital in November 2001.

Lim said the Doha Development Agenda had much to offer to the international trading community and urged countries to muster the political will to keep trade liberalization on the agenda.

Citing World Bank statistics, Lim said abolishing all trade barriers could boost global income by 2.8 trillion US dollars and lift 320 million people out of poverty by 2015. *AFP*

Oil prices near 29-month high

SINGAPORE—Leading Asian stock markets eased on Thursday and the dollar held above three-week lows against the yen as investors awaited developments on Iraq, keeping oil prices near 29-month highs.

Shares fell in Tokyo as banks slid on continued doubts about efforts to shore up their capital, and eased in Hong Kong and Australia. Taiwan and Korea clawed higher, but analysts said worries over a possible war in Iraq would confine Asian markets to narrow ranges.

"Even if you come out with really good earnings it doesn't matter too much, because investors are just not going to push your stock higher," said Martin Angel, dealer at Patterson Ord Minnett in Australia. "People are listening to the United States, which is saying we don't need a UN resolution—that scares people." Faced with stiff opposition, the United States and Britain intend to introduce a resolution within a week seeking UN authorization for a war against Iraq, both countries said on Wednesday.

But some hawks in the Bush administration oppose a deadline in the resolution and want the United States and Britain to issue a separate one on their own, diplomats said.

The push for a new resolution helped lift US oil to a 29-month high of $37.45 on Wednesday, but prices eased on Thursday as traders awaited the release of weekly US inventory data later in the day.

US light crude stood at $37.10 per barrel at 0230 GMT, down six cents from Wednesday's close in New York, where the contract rose 20 cents to settle at $37.16.

The dollar also came under pressure on Wednesday from war worries, hitting a three-week low against the yen, but it scrambled back in Asian trade, helped by threats of Japanese intervention to weaken the yen.

The dollar was stronger at 118.85 yen compared to 118.70 in late New York trade and a three-week low of 118.57 yen. The euro was little changed at $1.0760.

The stronger yen weighed on shares in Japanese exporters, which along with the slide in banks pulled the Nikkei share average down 0.86 percent to 8,604.17 as of midday.

Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, Japan's second-largest banking group, plunged 10 percent in early trade before erasing most of those losses by late morning. *Reuters*

Merrill Lynch officer resigns

HONG KONG—Merrill Lynch & Co. Inc., the world's largest brokerage, said on Thursday its Asia-Pacific Chairman Check Low has resigned for personal reasons and has been replaced by Raymundo Yu.

"It's a personal decision. He feels the time is right for him to pursue personal and professional interests," a Merrill spokesperson in Hong Kong said.

Yu, head of the company's international private client group in Asia, will succeed Low.

Investment banks around the region, like their peers in the United States and Europe, have been streamlining operations and cutting cost to boost their bottom lines amid weak financial markets. *Reuters*

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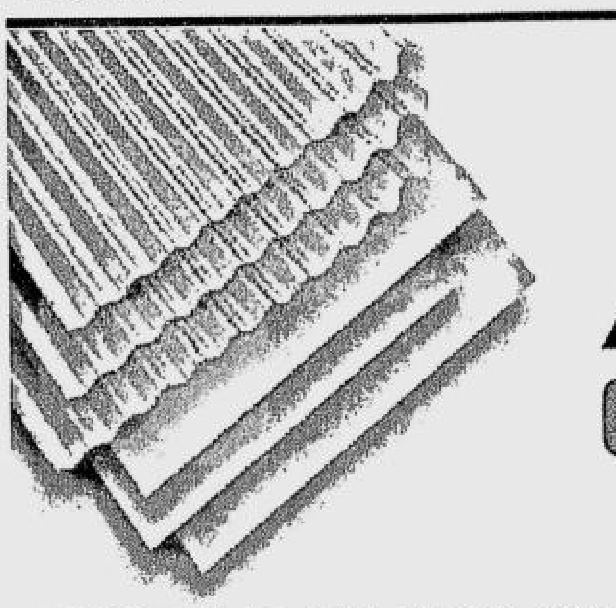

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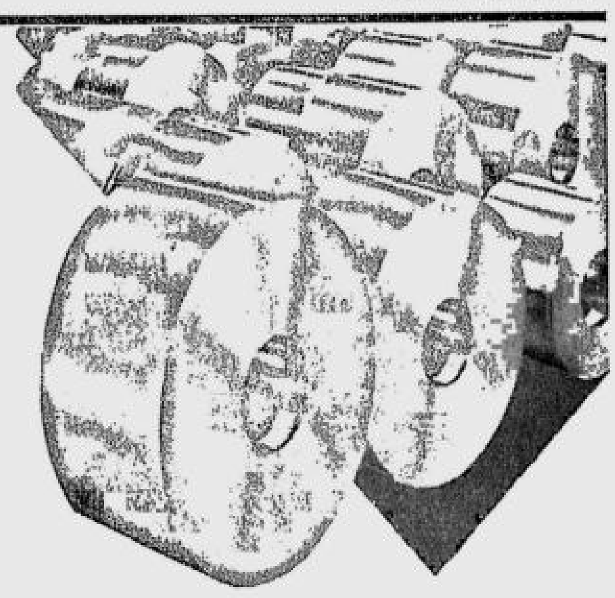

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APO Galfan was later introduced in the year 2000, further enhancing the company's position as manufacturer of quality products. The year 2002 marked another first in the industry as Puyat Steel Corporation was awarded as "Outstanding Manufacturer of Galvanized Sheets and Coils" by the Consumers Union of the Philippines on the occasion of the 1st World Consumers Welfare Protection Conference.

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Mr. Edgardo P. Reyes, PSC Chairman and Mr. Aristeo G. Puyat, PSC President are shown accepting the ISO 9001: 2000 Certificate from Mr. Uwe Roessiger, COO of TUV Rheinland.

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PSC's MANAGEMENT TEAM: Each one exuding the commitment that helped shape the company's quality management system. In photo are, from left: Mr. P. M. Nioko (Sales Manager), Mr. Pol C. Mabao (PPC/Logistics Manager), Engr. C. P. Carag (VP, Eng'g/QMR), Mr. W. P. Reyes (Sr. EVP), Mr. A. G. Puyat (President), Mr. U. Roessiger (COO, TUV), Engr. V. C. Arceo (VP, Mfg/ DQMR), Mr. E. P. Reyes (Chairman),Mr. E. R. Puyat II (EVP), Mr. S. D. Perez (VP & GM), Mr. A. C. Diaz (AVP, MIS/Procurement), Ms. A. B. Mariano (AVP, Finance & Acctg) and Mr. N. A. Yap (AVP, G.I. Sales).

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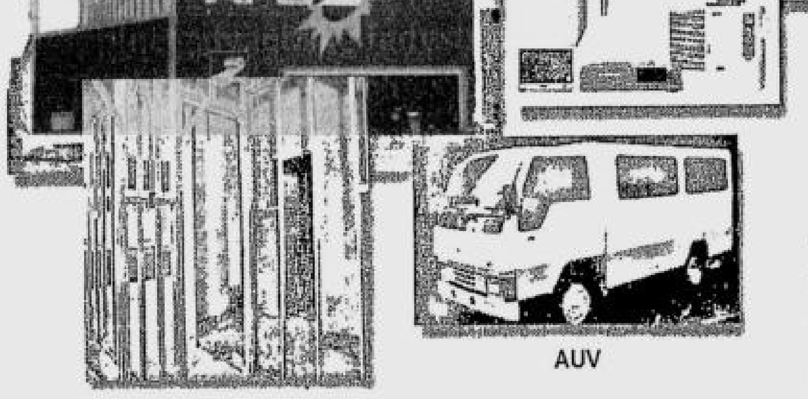

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To date APO Galfan remains to be unbeatable in terms of quality and performance as it is produced in the country's first CGL-NOF plant that is ISO 9001:2000 Certified. On top of that, APO Galfan is the only galvanized roofing material that comes with a 10-year warranty. It is coupled with a 2 - year warranty on installation for labor contracted with the company.

Behind the continuing success of the company in launching APO Galfan and in maintaining high quality standards of service every step of the way, are Puyat Steel's people.

Puyat Steel has remained faithful to its thrust to continuously provide avenues for development of its most valuable resource - its people. This is in keeping with the vision of our founder, Don Gonzalo Puyat, to nurture & develop the people's skills & potentials. Thus, enabling each one to come up with quality ideas that may later translate to better value for money for our customers.

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THE STRENGTH OF UNITY: PSC's management team share this proud moment with with the company's ISO prractitioners. (Standing, L-R) R. Closa, H. Mercado, M. Tuballa, L. Solatre (DCC/Admin Supvr), Engr. J. Lee (Prod'n Sr. Supvr), T. Abella, Mr. W. P. Reyes (Sr. EVP), Mr. A. G. Puyat (President), Engr. L. Salvador (Maint / Finishing Supt), Mr. Uwe Roessiger (COO, TUV), Engr. V. C. Arceo (VP, Mfg), Mr. E. P. Reyes (Chairman), Mr. E. R. Puyat II (EVP), Engr. M. Pedralvez (Process Imp Engr), Mr. S. D. Perez (VP & GM), Mr. P. C. Mabao (PPC Logistics Manager) (Sitted, L-R) R. Gozon, E. Gunday, A. Dacillo, A. Villanueva, Engr. R. Santarin (QA/ QC Supt), V. Fandino, J. Solo.

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AkhinThaiMasge50%OFF Bguio&Cbu 09167066435Mla8347357

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★ BONG 0920-2624192 ★

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MSSG F/M 09192714186 JADE

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REFLEXOLOGY

BLUE PALM 713-6553

Edward 7289285 09193365411

FEELS GOOD 4127758

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HOUSEHOLD

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Good-Maids-Yaya-Boy4214652

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LBAHAY 7113540

LIPAT BAHAY 535-2064

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REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

COMML/RESDL

PASIG

418sqm 5Dr 2Sty Apt. fnt College T-6414589, 09175372340

6.4Has Pasig 10 mins. to Ortigas T-6414589, 09175372340

HOUSE & LOT

LAS PINAS

BFRes Owner leavng 2sty 5BR 5TB FFurn 6M 8735848

MAKATI

5BR3TB3CG 2Sty LA240 FA170 7.5M 8161206 / 09176323826

MANILA

Income Property Nr UST 250m² Call 0917-4149898

LEON GUINTO NEAR QUIRINO AVE. Bnew/3Sty/3BR/3TB/grge P3.215M 8903461 loc 34

MARIKINA

Gnhls. new4br 2Mneg 9487112

QUEZON CITY

980T only 260m² nr Rbinson SM Fview Bung 09206022995

Comml Lot 250M² Bgalow w/3br Crge # 32 Cmwlth Ave. CHEAP 3.2M neg DBO 9221655 / 4353723 /9222455

Proj.2 5BR 2TB 426-2917

•U.P. Vill• 9210255/9219967

UP/DWN FULLY FURNSHD 9264889

WEST TRIANGLE bnew 2sty hse dplx 4br 6tb w/ mdsrm 2cargrg Sct Delgado bnew 3sty hse dplx 4 BR 6 TB w/mdsrm **3732570-71**

RIZAL

Bentley Park Subd LA108 FA100 3br2tb • 09178174547

OTHER AREAS

Tagaytay H&L Class A Subd. 3.9M w/terms 0917-6426549

BATANGAS

RushICanyonWoods Btngas P6.5M Call 0918-5052638

CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

1.6M C5 Nr The Fort 12T/mo. or 3Yrs No Int. or 10% D.P. LIPAT AGAD 3-5BR 15min Fr Mktl 0917-8169849

Ayala 1.8M/30m² 744-3465

BURGUNDY CORPORATE TOWER Lease to own units avlbl 252 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave. 8944516 / 5048 0916-4599639 / 09179853661

MANILA

NR LA SALLE TAFT Twnhse/3stry/3br/3tb/grge P3.215M 8903461 loc 34

MANDALUYONG

Up&Dwn 1-2BR Libertad Nr. Megamall NoDP RFO 2004 Start 11T • 0917-4140845

PARANAQUE

Ayala nr Airport 786T 10% DP P9T/MO studio - 3BR 20 mins fr Makati / Alabang Across SM Sucat 0917-8313226

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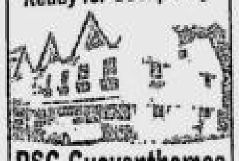

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CONDO/TWNHSE

QUEZON CITY

RushIFernandina 08 100sqm 4.8MNeg 3br 2tb 0916-7069277

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LOT

D.TUAZON 411m² 7342503/04

QUEZON CITY

LOYOLA GRAND VILLAS choice lots w/ view VISTA VERDE 2sty conc P4.2M 929-1832 • 426-5650

RIZAL

Antipolo 730m² 1.5M 7443465

VALENZUELA

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MEMORIAL LOT

Pre-Need Plan cremation/mem service P3,514/s.annual w/insurance, earn money back P34,120 (Flor) 0917-8405621

RESORT

Pansol Hot Spring priv 7870543

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COMMERCIAL/ RESIDENTIAL

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CONDO/TWNHSE

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CONDO/TWNHSE

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SAN JUAN

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LOT

MANDALUYONG

446sqm. Lot along Boni Ave., Ideal for bank, pawnshop or comm'l bldg P37T/sqm. neg. 531-1384/0390 ANDREW/JOY (0917) 834-2759

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

APARTMENT

QUEZON CITY

2BR COMM'L RESD'L ALONG JPNY LINE NR MKT SCH 9279844

Cubao P3.5 std Lady 4381480

WAREHOUSE/ FACTORY

53 GOV PASCUAL WHSE 3610652

BEDSPACE

RM/Bedspace 899-2148•5227127

BUSINESS RENTAL

524 EDSA KALOOKAN 3610652

BLDG OFFICE SPACE UMC BLDG 900 UN AVE ERMITA TEL 5211114

Nara 4Tabl DansFlor 4RENT Instal Basketbal Gym Flor CHEAP 9221655 Urbanwood

LOAN & MORTGAGE

SAL BUS REM 09195137286

2% W/O TAKING CAR 3677523/24

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

KIA

CERES AL-VAN '95 734-2503/04

MITSUBISHI

'77 Sportsman Van V8 P98T Neg 272-7613 DBO

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

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- The World Centre
- Paseo Center
- Burgundy Corporate Center
- Citibank Tower
- 139 Corporate Center
- Multinational Bancorp Center

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- Richmonde Plaza
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P800/L3 9136710/4333682

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STAREX MB HIACE 827-6605

WANTED TO BUY

BUYING USED CARS 8990215

CAR LOAN

1.5% Fast Car Loan 3677523/24

1.5 % EasyCarLoan 4080166 -67

1.5 Auto Fast Loan 712-5202

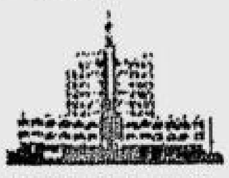
1.5% FAST CAR LOAN 7262780

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

CONDO/TWNHSE

QUEZON CITY

READY FOR OCCUPANCY



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1.5% FAST CAR LOAN 6560140

2% w/o Taking Car 8870490/95

2% w/oTaking Car 3732081-82

2% w/oTaking Car 3646028

2% w/oTaking Car 7221021

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

BILLIARDS

22T New Complt SR Impld 7767507

COMPUTER

Multimedia Computers Installment Plan No Downpayment Lifetime Service Warranty 6713842; 6721185; 7466993

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

YAMAHA GRAND & UPRIGHT ELITE PIANO CENTER Almost New:TERMS-7213124

OTHER EQUIPMENT

SL2 Silverson Mixer Tel 928-1152 / 0917-5243462

PETS

DALMATIAN PUPS 8905885

Republic of the Philippines
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL
6th Judicial Region
Branch 53 - Bacolod City
-oOo-

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FOR SUSPENSION OF PAYMENTS AND REHABILITATION OF C & L NOBLE, INC.,

COM. COURT CASE NO. 03-040

C & L NOBLE, INC., represented by its President, CESAR T. NOBLE, SR.
Petitioner.
x-------------------------------------x

ORDER

This is to act on the prayer for the issuance of a Stay Order, pursuant to Section 6 of the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation, in the present petition for Corporate Rehabilitation, filed by the petitioner.

Finding the petition sufficient in form and substance, having complied with Section 4, of the interim rules, the court hereby issues the following order:

(a) Atty. Jerry F. Bantilan, is hereby appointed as Rehabilitation Receiver and he shall enter upon his appointment upon posting a bond of P150,000.00;

(b) Henceforth or effective immediately, enforcement of all claims whether for money or otherwise is hereby stayed, whether such enforcement is by court action or otherwise against the DEBTOR, C & L NOBLE, INC., its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with said debtor.

(c) The debtor, C & L NOBLE, INC. is hereby prohibited from selling, encumbering, transferring or disposing in any manner, any of its properties except in the ordinary course of business, as of the date of filing of the petition;

(d) The debtor C & L NOBLE, INC. is prohibited from making any payment of indebtedness as of the filing of the petition;

(e) The debtor's (C & L NOBLE, INC.) supplier of goods or services are prohibited from withholding supply of goods and services in the ordinary course of business for as long as the debtor makes payments for the services and goods supplied after the issuance of the STAY ORDER;

(f) All administrative expenses incurred after the issuance of the STAY ORDER shall be paid in full by the Rehabilitation Receiver.

Set the initial hearing of this petition on Wednesday, March 26, 2003 at 8:30 in the morning. Let this order be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks.

All creditors and interested parties, including the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), are directed to file and serve on the petitioner a verified comment on or opposition to the petition, with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing putting them on notice that their failure to do so will bar them from participating in the proceedings.

Finally, all creditors and interested parties are directed to secure from the court copies of the petition and its annexes within such time as to enable themselves to file their comment on or opposition to the petition and to prepare for the hearing of the petition.

SO ORDERED.

Bacolod City, January 24, 2003.

(Sgd.) PEPITO B. GELLADA
Judge

(PDI--Feb. 14 & 21, 2003)

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

PETS

DOG TRAINER 4528681

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HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION
PROJECT MANAGEMENT & ACQUIRED ASSETS DISPOSITION GROUP

INVITATION TO BID

The Home Guaranty Corporation (HGC) hereby invites offers to purchase by way of sealed bids the property described as follows:

PROJECT : VILLA ANA MARIA SUBDIVISION
LOCATION : RODRIGUEZ, RIZAL
DESCRIPTION : 1,417 DEVELOPED LOTS
TOTAL LOT AREA : 63,258 SQ.M.
BID PRICE : P 158,145,000.00

The schedule of bidding activities is as follows:

Acceptance of Inquiries	**February 26 & 27, 2003**
Site Inspection	**February 28, 2003**
Bidding Proper	**March 10, 2003**

All sealed bids must be in the form of bulk and cash purchase.

A bidder's bond equivalent to 10% of the total bid price in the form of cash or certified manager's/cashier's check payable to HGC will be required of all prospective bidders.

The bidder is advised to inspect the properties subject of public bidding to see for himself their actual condition. All properties are being sold on "as-is" basis. Particulars may be obtained starting **February 26, 2003** from Home Guaranty Corporation (HGC), Project Management and Acquired Assets Disposition Group at the 2nd Floor, JADE Building, 335 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City or call Marichu Lazaro at tel. nos. 897-32-90/897-32-17.

Sealed bids must be received on or before 10:00 A.M., **March 10, 2003**, HGC Lobby, Ground Floor, JADE Building, 335 Sen. Gil J. Puyat Ave., Makati City.

Project information and other documents shall be issued only upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,500.00.

THE CORPORATION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL OFFERS; TO WAIVE ANY DEFECTS OR TO ACCEPT SUCH OFFER AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE CORPORATION.

(Sgd.) CORAZON N. ABANGAN
Vice President
Project Management and Acquired Assets Disposition Group

(PDI--Feb. 21, 22 & 23, 2003)

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

COMMISSION ON APPOINTMENT
Pasay City
ANNOUNCEMENT OF VACANCY
Pursuant to Mandate of R.A. 7041

One (1) LSO II (Budget Examiner) Item No. 85 SG 16-1 Q.S. Bachelor's degree relevant to the job. Proficient in Microsoft Computer operation and Career Service Professional eligibility.

One (1) LSA II (Clerk) Item No. 87 SG 10-1 Q.S. Completion of two (2) yrs studies in college, 1 year relevant experience, (4) hrs of relevant training and Career Service Subprofessional eligibility. Send Comprehensive Resume'with 2x2 colored picture to: Commission on Appointments, 6F PNB Financial Center, Pres. Diosdado Macapagal Blvd., Pasay City

MERCHANDISERS 527-1590

Ofc Staff 09186532375Ms.Mer

OFC STAFF 18-45 M/F Coll. Grad/ Level w/-or w/ o exp Call SHIE # 437-0454

OFC STF 09208090709 ADRIL

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

OFFICE STAFF 09192535623 GLENDA

PUBLIC NOTICES

ANNOUNCEMENT

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USA & Canada
421-72-58

CAREGIVER TRNG 5276418

ATTN: FIL.US VET. AND RET. US CITIZEN W/ MEDICARE A&B or Medical Card No. living in the Philippines who want to avail free medication. Contact Tel. 811-4071 752-4735

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that an affidavit of adjudication by sole heir ARACELI M. DE JESUS on certain bank deposits of deceased MAXIMA D. MACATANGAY as per Doc. NO. 279; Page No. 57; Book No. 5; Series of 2003 before Atty. Dolorsindo I. Paner Notary Public City of Manila (PDI-February 7, 14 & 21, 2003)

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late LUCIA LEABAN has been extrajudicially settled among her heirs PER DOC NO. 57; PAGE NO. 13 BOOK NO. 3; SERIES OF 2003 before notary public Atty. Jamir A. Bayot
PDI-February 21, 28 & March 7, 2003

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late DOMINGO F. CAPISTRANO SR. has been extrajudicially settled by his heirs before Atty. Elmer E. Manlangit, Notary Public of Makati City as per Doc. 476, Page 96, Book I, Series of 2002 (PDI-FEB.7,14 & 21, 2003)

AUCTION SALE

C.Y. Lopez Pawnshop Inc. #233 Buendia Shopping Plaza, Sen Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City #602 JP Rizal St. Makati City; #15 Gen Santos Ave., Lower Bicutan Taguig. Real St. Almanza Uno Las Pinas City will hold an Auction Sale on February 28, 2003 at 9:00 AM. Including all items pawned up to September 2002 V. Zamora Jr. Lic. Auctioneer

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is given of the loss of Urban Bank Stock Cert. #0530 (7Shares) #0694 (10Shares) issued to SPS Rafael & Rosario Dulalia. If no contest received new cert. will be issued. PDI-2/7,14 & 21, 2003

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

B/SELL EDUC'L PLAN 8061574

B/SELL FULLY PD EDUC PLAN 780-0106 / 0917-7939632

Club / Videoke Bar 1.5M neg with in Cubao Call Roy Tel 7275087 / 09178352895

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RESTAURANT For Sale P1.6M for Chinese Dimsum, Dumplings & Italian Pasta, Cofee Shop, @ Lyman Bldg. East Ave. Cor. V. Luna St., QC 926-8987

Teens&Adult Wear 09193952974

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722-1144/ 722-1155

Republic of the Philippines
City of Parañaque
Metro Manila

Office of the Treasurer

NOTICE OF AUCTION SALE

To satisfy the real estate tax deliquency of the following taxpayers, computation of which includes interest surcharges and penalties thereon as of December 2002 and after substantially complying with the pertinent provisions of Republic Act 7160, the City Mayor through the undersigned City Treasurer, hereby gives notice to all interested parties and to the public in general that on **March 17, 2003 at 10:00 o'clock in the morning at the Legislative Session Hall Bldg., Parañaque City,** the City Treasurer or his authorized representatives will sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash and in Philippines Currency, the real estate properties described below:

	Declared Owner/ Location	Area (Sq.m)	Classification/ Year	Tax Dec. #	Amount of Delinquency	Interest Due	Total Amt. of Delinquency
1.	Manila Bay Land Holding Inc. TCT-95324 Bgy. Tambo	70,000	Commercial 1999-2002	E015-06715	25,2000,000.00	12,852,000.00	38,052,000.00
2.	Manila Bay Park Dev. Inc. TCT-135240 Bgy. Tambo	13,699	Commercial 1999-2002	E015-05803	410,970.00	209,594.74	620,564.74
	TCT-136449 Bgy. Tambo	7,154	Commercial 1999-2002	E015-06704	214,620.00	109,456.20	324,076.20
	TCT-136452 Bgy. Tambo	5,621	Commercial 1999-2002	E015-06707	1,770,615.00	819,541.80	2,590,156.80
	TCT-136454 Bgy. Tambo	6,868	Commercial 1999-2002	E015-06709	2,163,420.00	1,001,354.40	3,164.774.40
	TCT-136455 Bgy. Tambo	5,857	Commercial 1999-2002	E015-06710	1,844,955.00	853,950.60	2,698,905.60
	TCT-135242 Bgy. Tambo	21,567	Commercial 1999-2002	E015-06712	7,764,120.00	3,959,701.25	11,723,821.25
	TCT-135243 Bgy. Tambo	1,250	Commercial 1999-2002	E015-06713	37,500.00	19,125.00	56,625.00
	TCT-135244 Bgy. Tambo	1,250	Commercial 1999-2002	E015-06714	37,500.00	19,125.00	56,625.00
			Sub-Total Grand-Total				21,235,548.99 59,287,548.99

(Sgd.) **LIBERATO M. CARABEO**
City Treasurer

(PDI – February 21 & 28, 2003)

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

February 12, 2003

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Housing Authority through the Bids and Awards Committee is inviting interested geodetic engineers to register and submit eligibility documents for the following survey project.

Contract Package/Location	Approved Budget (mil.)	Source of Funds	Contract Duration	Work Description/ Duration
Survey works for Special Patent Title of Manila Cadastre Area Encompassed by AO 503 and Lot Titling in Tondo Foreshore Project, Tondo, Manila	P1.673	Corporate Operating Budget for CY 2002	300 cd	Boundary, lot inventory consolidation, and subdivision surveys, individual lot titling and issuance of special patent

A. Instruction in the Registration and Eligibility of Consultants shall be issued from **February 24, to March 12, 2003**, upon payment of non-refundable fee of P200.00. The list of basic requirements is available at the Office of the BAC Secretariat, 2/F, NHA Main Building, Diliman, Quezon City. For more information, please see or contact the BAC Secretariat at phone no. 929-80-16 and 928-45-61/65 local 262.
B. Deadline of submission of Letter of Intent is on **March 10, 2003**. Submission of eligibility requirements is on **March 21, 2003**, not later than 10:00 a.m. at the office of the BAC Chairman. The bidders shall be informed of the date of issuance of Terms of Reference.
C. Bid documents shall be issued to eligible bidders upon payment of non-refundable fee of P500.00.
D. The provisions of the IRR of EO 40 shall govern all particulars relative to registration, eligibility screening, bidding, evaluation of bids, post-qualification and award of contract.
E. NHA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive formally any minor defect thereon, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government.

(Sgd.) **JOSEPH PETER S. SISON**
Assistant General Manager
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–Feb. 21 & 28, 2003)

National Power Corporation

INVITATION FOR ELIGIBILITY & TO BID
AD NO. PD2003-02

Opening Date:	**February 28, 2003**	**- 9:00 A.M.**
Pre-Bid Conference:	**February 20, 2003**	**- 2:00 P.M.**
E-Bidding Date:	**March 11, 2003**	**- 2:00 P.M.**

SUPPLY OF LABOR AND MATERIALS FOR THE GENERAL RENOVATION / IMPROVEMENT OF EMAN BEACH BUILDING LOCATED AT EMAN BEACH, BNPP COMPLEX, MORONG, BATAAN **P 2,174,591.63**

Interested parties are invited to apply for eligibility and to submit sealed bids on the above to be opened publicly at the Sampaguita Rm. Ground Floor Bldg. 2 NPC-OBC, Quezon Avenue cor. Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City.

Eligibility forms and bidding documents are available on **February 13, 2003** at the Accreditation, Bidding & IT Services, Procurement & Contracting Division, Materials Management Department upon payment of P50.00 per schedule which is non-refundable & presentation of **TIN / supplier number (DCE).**

Issuance of eligibility forms and bidding documents mornings only, 8:30 to 11:30 A.M. For inquiries, please call no. 921-25-74. Last day of issuance of bidding documents **February 25, 2003.**

Bidder is oblige to participate in e-bidding. Failure to do so will be a sufficient ground for disqualification.

The Corporation reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, waive any defect therein and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation.

MATERIALS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
NPC-OBC (Head Office)
Diliman, Quezon City

(PDI--Feb. 21 & 22, 2003)

Trans Co
National Transmission Corporation

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Date: February 10, 2003
Loan No.: EDCF PHL-3
Contract No.: Sp96.EDCFTLSE.Lms-0136

1. The **National Power Corporation (NPC)** has received a loan to be extended by the Export-Import Bank of Korea from the resources of the **Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF)** of the Republic of Korea towards the foreign exchange cost of Luzon Transmission Line and Substation Projects. NPC intend to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to eligible payments unders the Contract for the **Supply and Delivery of Line Materials and Substation Equipment for various Luzon Transmission Line and Substation Expansion Projects.**
2. The National Power Corporation now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders from the Republic of Korea for the Supply and Delivery of Line Materials and Substation Equipment for Various Luzon Transmission Line and Substation Expansion Projects under contract No. **Sp 96.EDCFTLSE.Lms-0136.**
3. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents starting **February 21, 2003** at the address given below from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

   Office of the Manager
   Bids and Contracts Management Department
   2nd Floor, Building 2, NPC-OBC
   National Power Corporation
   BIR Road corner Quezon Avenue
   Diliman, Quezon City (Zip code: 1104)
   Philippines
   TeleFax: (632) 921-2308
4. A complete set of bidding documents in *English* may be purchased by interested eligible bidders or authorized representative upon submission of a letter of intent to the above address and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **ten thousand (Php 10,000.00) Philippine Pesos** or **one hundred eighty five US Dollars (US$ 185.00)** per set.
5. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security in the amount of not less than **Korean Won, one hundred twenty two (122) million** and must be delivered to the above office address on or before **April 11, 2003** at 1:30 p.m.
6. A two-envelope bidding procedure will be adopted. Bidders are to submit simultaneously two (2) sealed envelopes, one containing the technical proposal and one (1) containing the price proposal. Initially, only the technical proposals will be opened. Technical proposals which are submitted by non-qualified Bidderrs or which are not substantially responsive will be rejected. The substantially responsive technical proposals, which have been submitted by qualified bidders, will be requested for full compliance to the specification but without changing their price proposal. Bidders who do not wish to amend their technical proposal will make their bid non-complying and will be rejected.
7. The price proposals will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the hour and date, and at the address to be advised by the Employer after approval by the Bids and Award Committee of the evaluation of the technical proposal.
8. Bids received will be opened in the presence of bidder's representatives who choose to attend at 1:30 p.m. on **April 11, 2003**, Solarium, NPC Building Complex, Diliman, Quezon City.
9. The National Power Corporation will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by bidders in connection with the preparation and delivery of bids.

BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE

By: (Sgd.) **WINIFREDO SM. PANGILINAN**
Chairman

(PDI - Feb. 17, 21 & 27, 2003)

DAVAO CITY WATER DISTRICT
J.P. Laurel Avenue, Davao City
Tel. No. 221-9400 Fax No. 226-4885/224-5392

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Davao City Water District (DCWD) hereby invites all interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery for the following items:

Item Package	Description	Ceiling of Bid Price
1	1-unit 100HP Vertical Turbine Pump and Motor for Production Well No. 20 upgrading	Php 950,000.00
2	1-unit 75HP Vertical Turbine Pump and Motor for Production Well No. 21 upgrading	Php 650,000.00
3	1-unit 100HP Vertical Turbine Pump and Motor for Production Well No. 28 upgrading	Php 700,000.00
4	1-unit 75HP Vertical Turbine Pump and Motor for Production Well No. 29 upgrading	Php 850,000.00
5	1-unit 125HP Vertical Turbine Pump and Motor for Production Well No. 30 upgrading	Php1,000,000.00
	TOTAL:	Php4,150,000.00

Eligibility requirements per item package are available at the Purchasing Division Office Starting **February 21, 2003** during its business hours. Deadline for the submission of eligibility documents/requirements will be on or before **March 7, 2003.**

Bid documents may be released only to applicants with a Notice of Eligibility, upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P300.00 per package starting **March 14 to April 7, 2003.**

Pre-bidding is set on **April 7, 2003** at 3:00 p.m. and the Opening of Bids on **April 11, 2003** at 9:00 a.m. at the DCWD Conference Room.

DCWD reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality/informality of the bids and to accept only such bids which are advantageous to the District.

(Sgd.) **ALFONSO E. LAID**
AGM for Administration
Chairman, Bid & Canvass Committee

(PDI - Feb. 21 & 28, 2003)

DAVAO CITY WATER DISTRICT
J.P. Laurel Avenue, Davao City
Tel. No. 221-9400 Fax No. 226-4885/224-5392

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Davao City Water District (DCWD) hereby invites all interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery for the following items:

Item Package	Description		Ceiling of Bid Price
1	7 units 450HP Horizontal Split Case Pump	Php	6,442,408.00
2	7 units 475HP Horizontal Electric Motors Open Drip Proof Type	Php	3,409,147.00
3	7 units 500HP Soft Start Controllers	Php	6,665,000.00
4	Capacitor Banking System	Php	1,750,000.00
	TOTAL:	Php	18,266,555.00

Eligibility requirements per item package are available at the Purchasing Division Office Starting **February 21, 2003** during its business hours. Deadline for the submission of eligibility documents/requirements will be on or before **March 7, 2003.**

Bid documents may be released only to applicants with a Notice of Eligibility, upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P500.00 per package starting **March 14 to April 7, 2003.**

Pre-bidding is set on **April 7, 2003** at 3:00 p.m. and the Opening of Bids on **April 11, 2003** at 9:00 a.m. at the DCWD Conference Room.

DCWD reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality/informality of the bids and to accept only such bids which are advantageous to the District.

(Sgd.) **ALFONSO E. LAID**
AGM for Administration
Chairman, Bid & Canvass Committee

(PDI - Feb. 21 & 28, 2003)

DAVAO CITY WATER DISTRICT
J. P. Laurel Avenue, Davao City
Tel. No. 221-9400 Fax No. 226-4885/224-5392

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Davao City Water District (DCWD) hereby invites all interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery for the following items:

Item Package	Description	Ceiling of Bid Price
1	**11-units Soft Start Controls and Capacitor Bank** (For Dumoy Production Well Nos. 33, 34, 35 & 36, Tugbok Production Well Nos. 1 & 2, Malagos Production Well, Panacan Production Well Nos. 1 & 2, Alambre-Lubogan Production Well, New Loon Production Well)	**Php. 2,738,927.30**

Eligibility requirements per item package are available at the Purchasing Division Office starting February 21, 2003 during its business hours. Deadline for the submission of eligibility documents/requirements will be on or before **March 7, 2003.**

Bid documents may be released only to applicants with a *Notice of Eligibility*, upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P300.00 per package starting **March 14 to April 7, 2003.**

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(Sgd.) **ALFONSO E. LAID**
AGM for Administration
Chairman, Bid & Canvass Committee

(PDI--Feb. 21 & 28, 2003)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
BULACAN STATE UNIVERSITY
MARCELO H. DEL PILAR COLLEGE OF LAW
City of Malolos

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

1. Intended opening of a pre-bar review class at Malolos to save you from city traffic and unnecessary inconvenience. Interested law graduates please contact tel. nos. (044) 662-0476 or (044) 791-6398 on or before February 28, 2003 for early assessment. Topnotch reviewers have signified willingness.
2. Opening of first year - first semester regular 4-year course CY 2003-2004.
3. Continuation of the second year class, CY 2003-2004.
4. Intended 5-year law course CY 2003-2004.
5. Interested parties contact above tel. nos. for schedule of admission test or proceed to Bulacan State University for further particulars.

The college of law aims to produce lawyers who excel in the field of law, lawyers with high ethical principles and through nationalist orientation who will carry the burden of national leadership in the future in emulation of the hero for which the school is named.

(Sgd.) CA JUSTICE JOSE C. DE LA RAMA (Ret.)
Dean, Marcelo H. del Pilar College of Law

(PDI - Feb. 16 & 21, 2003)

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His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin

condoles with the family of the late

Hilario S. Murillo, Sr.

who peacefully joined his Creator at the age of 68.

Let us join his wife **Eighty**, children; **Ricardo**, **Larry Jr.**, **Susana**, **Elena**, **Sandra**, in-laws; **Luisa**, **Christine**, **Ramon**, **Ramon**, mother **Sia Suy**, grandchildren; **Raiza**, **Hilario III**, **Renaldo**, **Chynna**, **Regina**, **Kimpearl**, **Grant**, **Jewelyn**, Brothers, Sisters, Relatives and Friends in prayer for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the Felicidad Chapel of Arlington Memorial Chapel, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Final Mass will be offered on February 22, 2003, Saturday at 7:00 a.m.

Interment will follow at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque.

Atty. Espiridion Ga. Heceta, Jr.

Son to (†) **Espiridion, Sr.** and (†) **Ginesa**, Husband to **Carmen**, Father to **Espiridion III (Jun-jun)** and wife **Cora**, Lolo to **Kale**, **Denise**, and **Paolo**, Brother to **Wilmer** and **Estherbelle**, and to Sisters **Kathleen**, **Guendolyn** and (†) **Rogelio Mah**, **Elizabeth** and (†) **Renato Moleta**.

Past President of Pacific Plans, Inc. (1980-1998), Great Pacific Life Assurance Corporation (1995-1998), and Pan Pacific Computer Center (1997-1998).

Awarded Most Outstanding Sillimanian.

Lawyer, trainor, officemate, mentor, leader, friend and father to all who were privileged to have encountered him.

Peacefully joined his Creator on February 20, 2003 at the age of 64. His body lies in state at La Funeraria Paz-Sucat, Manila Memorial Park, Dr. A. Santos Avenue, Parañaque City.

Necrological services will be held on Saturday, February 22, 2003 at 8:00 p.m.

Cremation will be on Sunday, February 23, 2003 at 3:00 p.m.

GREGORIO RAMOS LLAMAS

Our 'Papa' peacefully rests in the infinite Grace & Goodness of our Lord on the 17th day of February 2003 at the age of 79.

His loving wife **LEONOR**; children **FRANKIE & LILY**, **MENCHU & PETE (†)**, **CHED & BURCH**, **AMY**, **LOIE & MIKE**, **RAFFY & LANIE**, grandchildren & great grandchildren & other relatives request friends & pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Tanguile Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park), Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

Cremation will be on Sunday, February 23, 2003 at the Manila Memorial Park Crematorium after the 10:00 a.m. Mass.

"Pour out your heart before Him; God is refuge for us."

Psalm 62:8

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

ESTER SAULOG HERRERA

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude and sincerest appreciation to all those who offered Masses and prayers, sent flowers and messages of sympathy, and who in countless ways, condoled with and comforted us in our hour of bereavement.

Tomorrow, on her 40th day of returning to our Lord in Heaven, Holy Masses will be offered at the following churches:

St. Gregory The Great Parish *Indang, Cavite*	6:00 AM
Adoration Convent of the Divine Mercy *Tagaytay City*	6:00 AM
Our Lady of Fatima Parish *Kawit, Cavite*	6:00 AM
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish *UP Village, Quezon City*	6:00 AM
Our Lady of Pillar Parish *Imus, Cavite*	6:30 AM
Mary, Mother of Good Counsel Parish *Marcelo Green Village, Parañaque City*	6:30 AM
National Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help *Redemptorist Road, Baclaran*	6:45 AM

May we request those whose lives she has touched to continue to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Message of Thanks

Our Most Sincere Gratitude

To all who visited us and condoled with us in our time of sorrow.
To all who sent Mass cards, messages of sympathy
and flowers to express compassion and condolence.
To all who joined in our nightly vigils,
attended Masses and funeral rites.
To all who thought of us in our hour of grief and
grave word to console our hearts.

From the family of the late

ILL. LORENZO U. COMENDADOR 33°, IGH, A.& A.S.R.

who peacefully joined our Lord on February 5, 2003
San Pablo City, Laguna

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SBC GRAND ALUMNI HOMECOMING
The Golden and Silver Jubilarians of San Beda High School Class '53 and '78 play host to this year's grand alumni homecoming on February 22, Saturday, at the San Beda College quadrangle along Mendiola, Manila. The program starts with a fellowship luncheon for this year's silver jubilarians at 11:30 am followed by the Mass at 2 pm at the Abbey Church. Registration starts at 4 pm. The homecoming's theme **"Hinahanap-hanap kita, San Beda.... I'm Coming Home"** enjoins all San Beda alumnaes to attend this momentous affair. Photo shows some members of High School Class '78 led by Batch President Banjo Navarro III.

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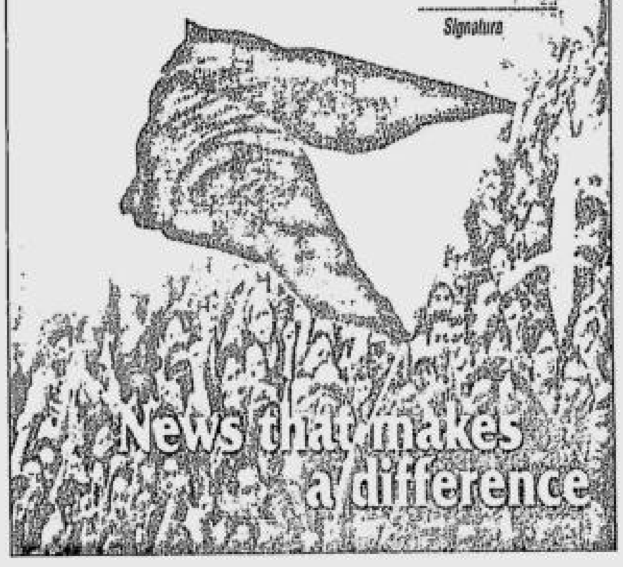

OBITUARIES

CAYETANA N. TAN VDA. DE GARCIA

of Villa Teresa Subd., Angeles City

February 26, 1928 – February 18, 2003

peacefully joined her Creator
and her loving husband ***Zenaido G. Garcia*** *on February 18, 2003.*

She is survived by:

Her children:
Erico (Bitcho), Gemelo (Melo), Clarissa (Cha-Cha) & Sandy, Ronaldo (Totie) & Annett, Ramil (Beng) & Sylvia

Grandchildren:
Jerico, Leonardo, Charina, Claudine, Carla, Anjello, Beatrize & Ian Raphael

relatives, nephews and nieces

Her remains lie in state at the Funeraria Angelina, Angeles City.

Interment will be on February 23, 2003 at the Holy Mary Memorial Park after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

ARLINGTON MEMORIAL CHAPEL
12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City. Tels. 715-1025; 715-1031; 715-1027
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"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places;
I am indeed going to prepare a place for you that
where I am you also may be." *(John 14:1-3)*

Atty. Hernando N. Valmores

Peacefully joined his Creator
on February 13, 2003.

His beloved wife **Aurora**; children **Luzviminda, Evangeline, Hernando Jr., Ma. Aurora, Theodore, Venustiano** (†), **Richard, Gerard, Ma. Teresa Fatima, Robert, Rosemarie**, and **Anthony**; children-in-law; and grandchildren request the pious readers especially those whose lives he touched to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains will arrive in Manila from Toronto, Ontario, Canada on February 22, 2003 and will be brought to the Sapinoso Memorial Chapel, Gen. E. Topacio St., Imus, Cavite.

Interment will be on February 25, 2003 at the Imus Cemetery after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at the Imus Cathedral.

"From darkness let the light shine!"
Genesis 1:3

SY HUA BING DE GUZMAN

of Sta. Cruz, Marinduque and Lucena City

has joined his wife ***"Maria Rosa Kho"***
and peacefully rests in the infinite warmth and embrace of our Lord
on February 17, 2003, at the age of 74.

His loving children, **Nemelia & Arthuro, Ely & Romy** (†), **Marilyn & Charlie, Elizabeth & Romulo Jr., August & Josephine, Jupiter & Janna, Wison, Reynaldo, Gerry, Jenevieve & Ivan, Clarence Clifford**; grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Holy Rosary Chapel,
C. M. Recto St., Lucena City.

Interment will be at St. Ferdinand Memorial Park,
Lucena City, on Saturday, 22 February 2003.
after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

AT&T stop-payment stance to cost RP carriers $60-$80M

By Abigail L. Ho

THE LOCAL telecommunications industry stands to lose around $60 million to $80 million if the United States Federal Communications Commission upholds AT&T Corp.'s petition to stop all US carriers from making settlement payments to carriers here.

Should the FCC grant AT&T's stop payment order petition, Smart Communications Inc. legal, external and carrier relations head Rogelio Quevedo said all of the local carriers' receivables would no longer be repaid, at least for the duration of the order.

The $60 million to $80 million, he said, did not even include potential earnings from present and future calls made through these US carriers.

Globe Telecom Inc. senior vice president for corporate and regulatory affairs Rodolfo Salalima added that AT&T was leveraging on threats to withhold payment for millions of dollars in overdue termination charges to avoid an increase in the termination rates from $0.08 to $0.12 for fixed lines and from $0.12 to $0.16 for mobile phones, that local carriers unanimously imposed starting Feb. 1.

"While Globe continues to act reasonably in this matter, any discussions which AT&T may wish to have with Globe on this should not be complicated by threats of withholding payment, particularly of sums long overdue," he said.

He explained that AT&T owed Globe around $13.5 million, $3.5 million of which the US carrier promised to repay last December but ended up withholding to "gain leverage in its negotiations with Globe."

While not agreeing to the new termination rates that local carriers had imposed, AT&T even made a termination rate counterproposal of $0.06 for fixed line and $0.10 for cellular phones, even lower than the previous rates of $0.08 and $0.12 per minute, respectively.

Globe, Smart, Digital Telecommunications Phil. Inc., and Bayan Telecommunications Inc. also denied blocking calls coming from AT&T's network in the US in a bid to pressure the US carrier into accepting the new termination rates.

In separate news briefings and statements, the local carriers also denied having been invited by AT&T to discuss the new rates.

"AT&T had not been actively negotiating with us since November 2002 when we informed them that we will increase our rates. AT&T never sat down with us. We were just waiting for them to come in," he said.

Quevedo also said that AT&T had been earning a large amount of money from local carriers, yet it still did not want to give in to the new rates that, according to US FCC and International Telecommunications Union standards, were not even close to the prescribed ceiling.

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TARGETING CHINA

Cash in on a 1.3-B consumer market

By Dennis M. Arroyo

THOSE who saw the Chinese movie "Hero" starring Jet Li couldn't help but gape in awe. In one battle scene, hordes upon hordes of Qin soldiers rained arrows on the enemy, swamping them in mind-boggling numbers.

Companies around the world likely view the Middle Kingdom with the same respect. The great army of people "all under Heaven" powers one of the largest economies in the world.

No more Great Wall in trade

Some Filipino firms look at China as a threat—its low wages translate into cheap products and competitive exports, a bane to Filipino manufacturers. Street vendors sell bargain-basement Chinese toys and clothes, while supermarkets stock their shelves with canned goods.

The reality is that exports from the Asian giant will not fall and will likely rise. The economic Great Wall has come down, as China now belongs to the World Trade Organization. Further, there is some pressure to close down inefficient state-owned enterprises. Authorities also see much migration by farmers into the cities. So China has to turn to export to supply jobs for those who will be unemployed.

The alternative view is that China stands as a giant opportunity: why not export to the great market? There is much room for growth in trade with the Middle Kingdom. Despite its enormous size, it is only ranked No. 10 as a Philippine export market, gaining revenue of $711 million in 2002.

10-percent annual growth

The numbers and facts are dazzling, as seen in the website of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (Citem).

China has an immense market of 1.3 billion consumers. Incomes per person are low, at $840 every year, but the nation has amazed the world with its sizzling growth. China's growth in gross domestic product averaged 10 percent over the last 15 years and it should race at 6 percent to 9 percent over the next 10 years. For example GDP rose by 7.1 percent in 2001, and it should reach 7.5 percent to 8 percent this 2003.

Credit for the economic revolution goes to the late leader Deng Xiaoping.

More than 20 years ago he introduced market reforms, starting with agriculture, then proceeding into services and heavy industry. The transition lifted 200 million Chinese out of poverty.

Given such rates and such a vast population, the Asian giant will become the largest economy in the planet by 2020—even beating the United States in total GDP.

As of the present, China is the sixth largest economy in the world, trailing the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain and France.

Growing middle class

Its middle class runs to some 250 million—more than three times the Philippine population—and salaries there are rising fast. By 2010 the middle class will have 400,000 members, almost the total current population of the Asean.

There's this interesting quote on the Sino market by Bill Roegnik of America's National Broiler Council. He wants to supply more chicken feet, a Chinese delicacy, but there are supply limits. "We could sell a lot more but there are only 7 billion chickens in the US, and each has only two feet," he says.

The NBA recognizes the enormous market potential there, so it is gaining a foothold via basketball wonder Yao Ming. His games for the Houston Rockets get beamed into millions of Sino TV sets, creating a new pool of demand for NBA programming.

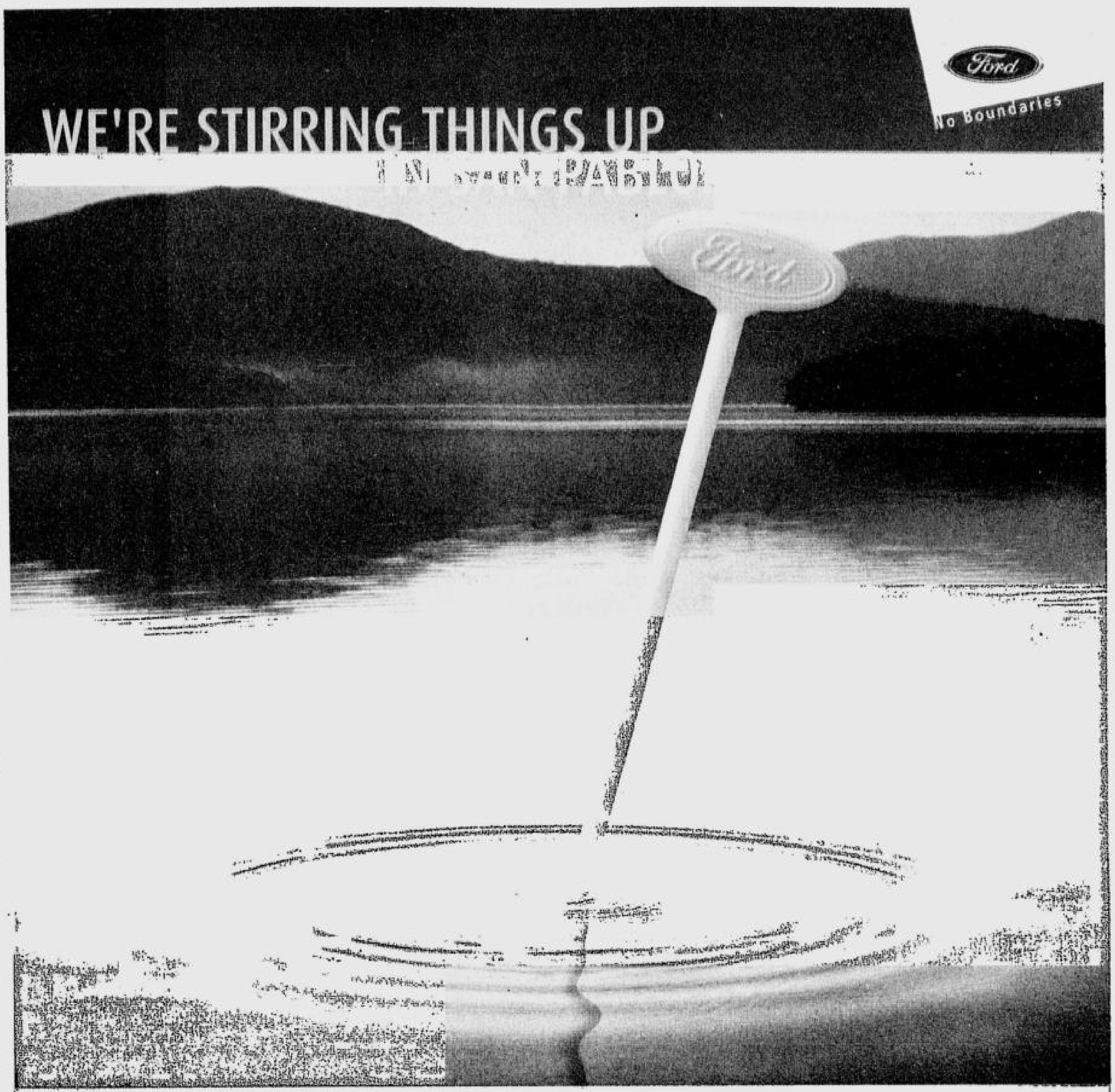
What about the market for high technology? China's Internet use is minimal for now, but it doubles every six months.

There is much variety in this gigantic market. One finds varied spending habits among consumers of the main cities of Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjing and Chongqin.

Tsinoy ties

Filipino firms have many links with Chinese Filipinos. After all, half of listed companies are owned by these ethnic Chinese, and Tsinoys are friends, relatives, business associates, clients. Another bridge is the large presence of Filipino workers in Hong Kong.

CASH/ C2



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Need network provider dependability?

The ever-changing automobile

By Antonette C. Tionko
SGV & Co.

TAX-FILES

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance (DOF) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) recently issued Revenue Regulations No. 4-2003 covering excise tax on automobiles.

Under these regulations, certain Light Utility Vehicles and Light Commercial Vehicles are now subject to excise tax, thus increasing their selling price. The regulation was criticized for being an untimely adverse measure that would hamper the recovery of the auto industry.

Under Section 149 of the Tax Code, there is an ad valorem tax on automobiles based on the manufacturer's or importer's selling price, net of excise tax and value added tax.

The applicable rate depends on engine displacement, as follows:

Gasoline	Diesel	Tax Rate
Up to 1600	Up to 1800	15%
1601-2000	1801 -2300	35%
2001 to 2700	2301-3000	50%
2701+	3001+	100%

You will note that the excise tax is imposed on automobiles. For this reason, the definition of the term "automobile" has evolved. Many may be surprised to find out that the "non-automobile" they purchased last month suddenly turned into an "automobile," at least, for excise tax purposes.

Changing definitions

An automobile is simply defined in the dictionary as "a usually 4-wheeled automotive vehicle for passenger transportation."

But in Revenue Regulations (Rev. Regs.) No. 14-97 dated Nov. 5, 1997 the term has been defined as "a four- or more-wheeled vehicle other than trucks as defined in R.A. 4136 and R.A. 1188 which is propelled by gasoline, diesel, or any other motive power and specially designed for the transport of persons and not used primarily for carrying freight and merchandise: Provided, That its seating capacity shall be less than 10 adult passengers including the driver:"

"Provided, further, That the sizes of the passenger seats shall not be less than 35 centimeters wide and 60 centimeters long. It shall include utility or light commercial vehicles designed for passenger use with seating capacity of less than 10 adult passengers, including the driver."

The 1997 regulations went on to provide specific guidelines on seat measurements. For example, a half seat shall not be counted as one passenger seat even if there are many half seats. There were also rules on counting rows of seats, feet space, leg and head room and exclusion of seats in the rear cargo/luggage compartment as well as jump-seats.

Complaints

Some time after the implementation of Rev. Regs. 14-97, some sectors of the automotive industry complained because the effect of the regulation was that high-priced 4 x 4s which could meet the seating capacity requirement were enjoying tax exemptions just like the lower-priced AUVs, while mid-priced sedans did not.

A new regulation was thus issued in 1999. It was stated that all four-wheel drive vehicles, primarily designed to carry passengers shall be considered and taxed as automobiles. While this 1999 regulation addressed the issue on 4 x 4s, it also simplified the rules in determining compliance with the seating capacity requirement.

It simply required that each seat be at least 35 cm. x 60 cm. and that the driver's seat be 50 cm. x 60 cm. Gone were the rules on measurement of half seats, contiguous rows of seat, feet space, head-room, etc. Thus, while the loophole on 4 x 4s was plugged, it also allowed exemption for smaller vehicles that could comply with the 10-seat requirement under the less stringent measurement guidelines.

The Department of Finance (DOF) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), under Rev. Regs. 4-2003, now imposes new guidelines for purposes of determining what is an automobile.

The new regulation maintains the 10-seat requirement and the same measurements in order to be excluded from the definition. However, it reinstated and refined the seat measurement rules in Rev. Regs. 14-97. It now includes rules on measurement of bucket type seats.

It also provides that seats should have space that is not occupied by any obstruction, such as but not limited to, doorside built-in armrest, overhead aircon duct, protruding amplifier box or wheel house.

Nothing new

For this purpose, an imaginary straight line shall be along the obstructed space drawn, measured and deducted from the total width of the seat.

There are also requirements on backrests and measurement of seats facing opposite each other. It also reinstates the rules on half-seats, feet space and head room.

As regards jumpseats, foldaway seats and fold-down seats, these shall be considered passenger seats only if the intended passengers have access through the side door(s) of the motor vehicle and they are factory installed and meet the specifications in the regulation.

A comparison of the three most recent regulations on excise tax on automobiles reveals that the latest one, the controversial Rev. Regs. 4-2003, is not entirely new.

It is merely a combination of the two previous regulations with some refinements, which are simply intended to plug the existing loopholes.

In any event, the regulation provides that all automobiles that are completely assembled or imported (CBU) units, including Completely Knocked Down (CKD) units, Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) Units that are located within assembly plants or warehouses or customs premises upon effectivity of the regulations, shall continue to be covered by the previous regulations.

In other words, they are not yet considered "automobiles" for excise tax purposes.

It is to be expected that some car manufacturers will soon come up with new "non-automobile" models. It is also to be expected that their competitors will protest and demand that there should be a "level-playing field." And, in all likelihood, the DOF and the BIR will again issue new regulations re-defining an "automobile."

To avoid confusion, Congress should enact legislation which rationalizes the excise tax imposed on automobiles and results in more competitive car prices.

Follow your heart when choosing a venture

THE MUSHROOMING of malls in Metro Manila and the provinces has given small businessmen the opportunity to upgrade the quality and raise the status and image of their businesses.

People go into business for a variety of reasons—some were forced because of unemployment, some saw a need and filled it. MStar Las Piñas, a member of the Star Group of Malls, is one of the few shopping centers in Metro Manila that has come to embrace the idea of entrepreneurship by making mall space affordable for these small businessmen with big ideas.

As a fitting recognition of their efforts, MStar Las Pinas is home to new businesses whose owners and their stories are inspiring.

ALVAREZ: Hobbyist in business

Business you're at home with

The hobby of Mary Anne Gecale Alvarez is what made her open a store in MStar. She designs and makes tabletop fountains.

"It was just a hobby. I am fond of designing. I also make water fountains for landscaping, the big ones. My table top fountains used to be just for the house, then I found out that it is the "in" thing now," says Mary Anne of her beginnings.

She did not start in MStar, but Mary Anne decided to put up a kiosk type store in the said mall.

"I had a friend who has a store in one of the bigger malls in Alabang and I brought her my table top fountains for display. But I opted to open a small store in MStar since I only needed a small space and my business is small anyway," she adds.

Convenience of location was also considered. The Alvarez's residence is within the area of business. She drives herself to work with ease.

Patience is one virtue that she nurtures. "I also believe that in time, it is not the location. You can have a shop in bigger malls, yes. But the people are not coming in. I believe that it is your product that merits the success of the business, no matter where the location is, people will come to you."

Mary Anne is amazed and happy with the results her kiosk in MStar has brought her. "It's not everyday that you can sell your products. But my small store had not only brought in some buyers of tabletop fountains but also got me contracts for product souvenirs and even to make bigger fountains in landscaping.

My income inside the mall is not so big but what happens is I get big projects outside, *parang baligtad*."

Overcoming hurdles

There was a time though when sales were low that Mary Anne contemplated on giving up her small shop.

"Last month I was almost losing hope and I wanted to give up. Then this month sales boomed. I was happy and said I won't give up.

The moral support and encouragement of her husband and family also play a very significant role facing the everyday challenges of her business.

Mary Anne admits that the number one hurdle she overcame was her fear of entering into a business. She could have just easily stuck with the janitorial services of her husband, but she wanted to do this on her own. Her husband could also have given her the start-up capital but she chose to raise it herself. "I used my own savings to prove something to myself," she asserts.

Her initial capital was around P30,000.

Self-imposed quality control

Mary Anne, whose father is a furniture designer and maker in Laguna, took up voice culture in the University of Sto. Tomas Conservatory of Music. But five years seemed too long for her so she shifted and enrolled at the Philippine School of Interior Design. Designing was ingrained in her because of her father's business.

"Even before I wanted to be an Interior Designer. *Kasi* it's of the arts. I like anything that has to do with arts. I will not stop if it's not perfect. Even with the fountains I create. I make them personally. If the cement takes too long I repeat it even if it takes several days."

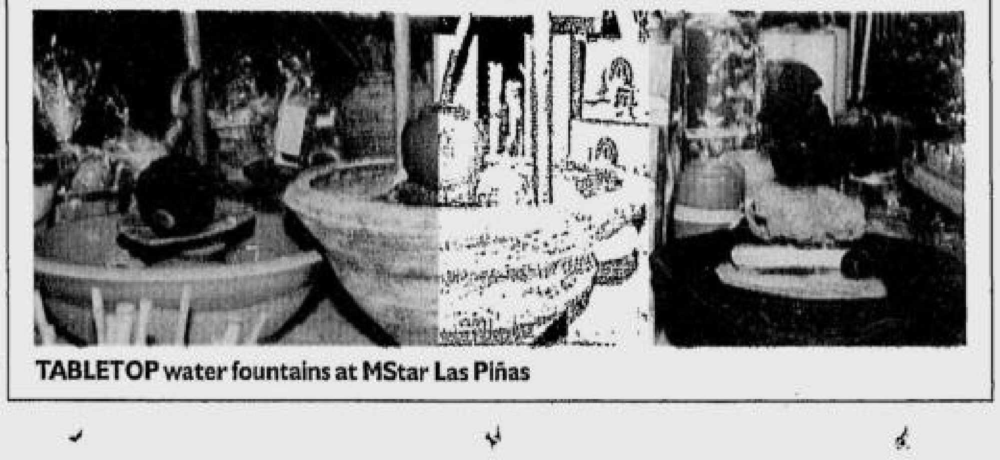
Her Music background did not go to waste as she gives piano and voice tutorials at the Yamaha School of Music in Paranaque.

Mall support

"I'm also happy at the face lift of the MStar. The stores are increasing. Gloria Maris opened a branch, so it's really nice already. *Maganda na talaga*," Mary Anne shares.

"As a tenant of MStar, it also helps that you are considered a partner by the mall administration. The times that I wanted to pull-out, they are there to egg you on and see how else they can help make your business work," she adds.

Her experience in the business venture prompted her to share this advice: "You have to follow your heart. It is a mix of 100 percent prayers and hard work. Pursue what you really want to do because it's a pity to put up a business just because you are forced to do so. It's really different if you love what you are doing."


TABLETOP water fountains at MStar Las Piñas

Finding the perfect balance between fashion and trends

INSIDE the mind of Dulce V. Macabanti, executive vice president and general manager of JD Mac Corp., are fragments of colors and textures wanting escape. In her mind's eyes she looks at the hundreds of young ladies walking leisurely at the malls, hurrying up to offices or schools and social gatherings and fashion inspiration instantly hits her.

For some time now she has translated these images into trendy apparel that lines up the racks of the company's wholesale customers.

Recently, their company ventured out into the retail business. "This provides me and the company a more personal and direct link to the end customers of the fashion industry where we have quietly found success. I have all these images running inside my mind and putting them together to come up with effortlessly sexy, chic and easy-going clothes, bags and accessories which feel and look good to our customers. It is something that is fulfilling and profitable, if I may say so," explains the amiable CPA.

"I love dressing up people so much that we did not hesitate in grabbing the first opportunity of putting up our own shop and coming up with our own brand. In our shops people can get a glimpse of my personal interpretations of current fashion trends and hopefully adapt it to their own lifestyle," she adds.

The vision brought about Parfait, the company's very own brand and clothes shop that first opened at the Festival Supermall. Parfait is French for perfect, which describes the store's feel of what looks good on young women. Parfait also brings about images of light, warm, playful and feminine colors for subtle "fun" effect.

"Then we were very fortunate and extremely grateful to be invited to put up a branch at SM Southmall. This subsequently opened up opportunities for us in SM City Iloilo and quite recently at our popular branch at SM City North Edsa. Business has been quite good considering that the country is still reeling from the after effects of the Asian financial crisis, the political turmoil and uncertainty, the 9/11 tragedy, and quite recently the spate of bombings and threats which affected the whole economy. In addition to the above, we also now have a store at the Outlet Yard and concessionaire outlets at Cinderella (SM Megamall and Target Mall) and Robinsons (Imus). We are hoping that we could also be given opportunities for store spaces by other malls (both in Metro Manila as well as in the provinces) so that we can reach out to a wider base of customers."

PARFAIT at SM City North Edsa. (Inset) The women behind Parfait, Dulce V. Macabanti (left) with retail business manager Lenie Galila.

Getting started took a lot of preparations. "We didn't just apply for a space and filled the shops with clothes. It wasn't just a whim but a business prospect that I personally got ready for by going back to school, attending relevant seminars and conferences and taking up a post-graduate course in Retail and Franchise Management. Yet, even with a business course to back me up I must confess that we've made several wrong moves in the first few months of operations. But it's all part of the "growing pains." You still learn valuable lessons along the way. And to be really good at whatever business you're in you have to be sure to learn the lessons.

"The things I've learned kept us together during the crucial months following 9/11. Retail business really suffered but we insistently hanged on to quality at the same price ceiling that surprisingly resulted into achieving 95 percent of our sales targets.

"This year we're jump starting the summer months with two major Parfait lines. The Sea and Sand Collection will be flaunting the soft and beautiful feminine shape with linens and dreamy cottons in new hues of blue, beige and the ethereal white. We're also coming out with a Moroccan-inspired line to complement the summer holiday. Images of exotic Morocco will be translated into tunics, slim pants, skirts and blouses in vibrant pink, green and tangerine," informs Parfait's very own Retail Business retail manager Lenie Galila.

Macabanti adds that Parfait will also be introducing the Parfait Privilege Card that customers can avail of after a P5,000 purchase within 6 months. Cardholders will be entitled to a 10-percent discount on regular-priced items and monthly mailers to keep them posted of new Parfait lines.

"We shall be launching our intimate apparel line called Parfait Essentials through an in-store promotion. And franchising is in the horizon," says Macabanti who was looking like a perfect successful woman.

Cash in on a 1.3-B consumer market

From page C1

President Macapagal-Arroyo has identified China as a priority, as seen in the Philippine Export Development Plan (PEDP).

RP exhibit in Shanghai

Now comes an opportunity to explore the Sino market. The Philippine government is setting up its first major trade show in Shanghai. The event is called "Ties that Bind–a Philippine Solo Exhibition." It will present Filipino products and services at the Shanghai Exhibition Center from March 27-30, 2003.

The show is organized by Citem, which is under the Department of Trade and Industry. Supporting the effort are the House of Representatives, and the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Tourism, and Agriculture.

Visitors to the show include Chinese importers, wholesalers, distributors, department stores, buying offices, and trading firms.

EXPORTS
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Among the exhibitors are Filipino firms involved in garments, jewelry, fashion accessories, furniture, food and beverages, building materials, information technology, IT-enabled services, design services, and education services.

Those who can apply are Philippine-based companies registered as manufacturing or trading firms with established production capacity. They can download the application form from the Citem website: www.citem.gov.ph. Other requirements are listed on the site. *Comments to <darroyo@philonline.com.*

Tyson spending to boost image

SPRINGDALE—"Hey, it's the chicken guy."

That's what people used to tell Bob Corscadden when they spotted the Tyson chicken logo on his shirt.

But the chief marketing officer of Tyson Foods Inc. says that greeting is out of date, because these days the US chicken giant is spreading its wings into beef and pork.

To vanquish those perceptions that it is a chicken-only company, Tyson will spend a $100 million this year on marketing and ads telling consumers about Tyson-brand beef and pork.

While expanding the Tyson name to beef and pork appears logical and largely drew praise from food analysts, there may be a potential for problems.

Recent recalls of meat because of E.coli and listeria contamination have plagued the meat industry.

Should Tyson-brand meat have to be recalled that could harm the name, said Todd Duvick, food company analyst with Bank of America.

"Those types of situations can damage the brand. It just happens to be an industry that tends to be subject to all those risks," Duvick said.

This new marketing push and increased brand-name exposure comes at a time when the company is wrestling with low profits and sagging shares.

Also, it is in court fighting charges that it hired illegal immigrants to work in its food plants.

In an interview at Tyson's headquarters here, Corscadden and Greg Lee, Tyson's chief operating officer, saKid the marketing effort is designed to steer Tyson's longtime chicken customers to its beef and pork.

"One of our objectives is to educate consumers about Tyson beef, chicken and pork," Corscadden said.

Tyson, which has sold chicken since 1935, entered the beef and pork market in a big way in late 2001 when it bought meat giant IBP Inc.

However, it is still largely known as a chicken company.

The impact on earnings and market share was played down by the two officers. The focus, they said, is on brand identity and higher-priced, case-ready products.

Tyson sells more pounds of beef and chicken than anyone and is a leader in pork sales.

"Opportunistically, we would like to move those pound numbers up. We also want to move the value of those pounds up, by doing more of the preparation for either the consumer or restaurateur. Obviously, we want to get paid for that," Lee said.

However, it has yet to be proven if consumers will pay the higher prices for Tyson meat.

"I think the big question is can they charge a higher price because of the Tyson brand. It is not at all clear to me that consumers will buy branded beef over unbranded beef at a premium," Duvick said.

Meat companies like Tyson have been slowly putting their names on case-ready packages of fresh beef and pork.

Case-ready meats are packaged and labeled at the meat plants, rather than at supermarkets, saving the supermarkets time in putting the meat on store shelves.

While several years old, case-ready meats have been slow in development. Lee estimates less than 10 percent of all fresh beef and pork sales are in case-ready form.

For Tyson, a $23-billion company, it expects to sell about $1 billion of case-ready beef and pork this year and a similar amount of case-ready chicken.

"As we look over the next number of years this is going to progressively take a much larger

TYSON/C5

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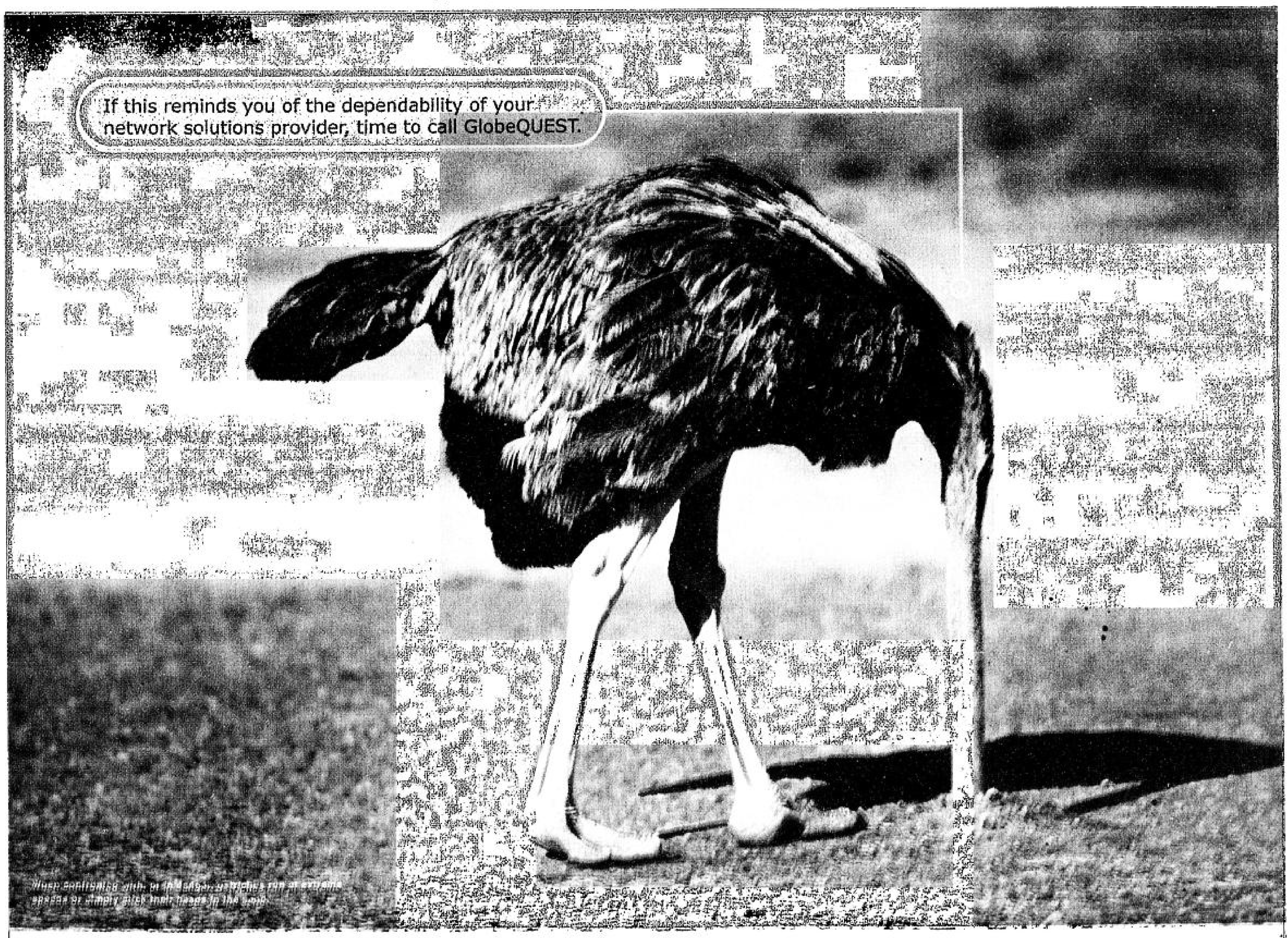

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Expanding the concept of a 'home branch' to a 'home bank'

AT FIRST glance, there seems to be nothing remotely similar to going home and going to the bank. Close scrutiny of prevailing banking practices in the country however, prove otherwise.

"One striking characteristic of the Philippine banking industry is the concept of a 'home branch.' When a person opens an account with a particular bank, the branch where the account was opened becomes the home branch of the depositor," says International Exchange Bank (iBank) EVP and retail banking cluster head Nilo Pacheco Jr.

Often, depositors choose a particular home branch solely on the basis of how near and convenient the branch is to their homes or offices without much thought to other, more important considerations.

What many people overlook is the general limitation in the home branch system—since the home branch is where the depositor's records are kept on file, it is the only branch that will provide a full range of banking services and entertain over the counter transactions of the depositor.

While this may be sufficient for some, such a restriction is hardly acceptable for individuals on the go such as entrepreneurs, middle managers and young professionals who are frequently on the road or out of town.

For these mobile individuals, the limited amount that can be withdrawn at any given time through the automated teller machines (ATMs) is hardly enough.

They need fast and easy access to their funds while out-of-town just as if they were transacting in their home branch.

"That is the reason why iBank has expanded the concept of a 'home branch' to a 'home bank.' With iBank, a depositor of one branch will feel just as comfortable and at home with another branch," says Pacheco.

No longer will a depositor need to transact in his home branch to feel at home. In iBank, any branch will be a home branch of the depositor.

Ceramics . . .

From page C8

also extended its product lines to include candles, plants, soaps and other decorative items.

Strategic marketing did the trick.

For a typical company expanding its product lines, there is such thing as cannibalism of a certain product by another. But in his case, Joel is not worried that one of his products might eat up the market of another. Instead of limiting his product lines, he introduces new Custom Clay designs almost every week. Turning a prospective threat into an opportunity is strategic marketing, Joel asserts.

"What we actually do," he explains, "is to scan the market. We look at the products that are out in the market, we look at the competitors' stores and we also look at the trends and find out what else might be included in our store. Sometimes the products that we develop are pieces owned and shown to us by our customers."

This was how Custom Clay stores began carrying complementary products like scented candles and soap. As it turned out, these couldn't have eaten into their ceramic sales because candles and soaps were sold in ceramic holders.

"The strategy even enhances our sales," Joel exclaims.

Introducing new designs as often as possible is the strategy employed by Custom Clay to gain an edge over its competitors from China. As these exporters ship container loads of ceramic products that take time to be absorbed by the Philippine market, a delay takes place in new design development by the Chinese manufacturers and new stock-keeping by their distributors in the Philippines.

Taking advantage of this delay to specifically target the middle-to-high-end market niche is strategic marketing, Joel points out.

Besides, ceramic products from China are inferior surplus from the Chinese manufacturers and thus have some problems on quality, he adds.

"Thus, if you really want to target the upper scale market, you have to produce first-class ceramic wares even if they are priced higher," he says.

The intricate design, the raw materials like porcelain and bone china, and ornaments like gold, silver and platinum make a ceramic piece more exquisite but more expensive. But Joel is certain that there is a market for these products especially abroad. He therefore urges other ceramic manufacturers to target this niche, as China is difficult to beat in its dominance of the low-end market.

Relearning marketing

Coming from a Chemical Engineering background, Joel, who also holds a Ph.D., admits that strategic marketing was "unfamiliar territory" when he started the business. A course on strategic marketing spurred him to widen his entrepreneurial vision.

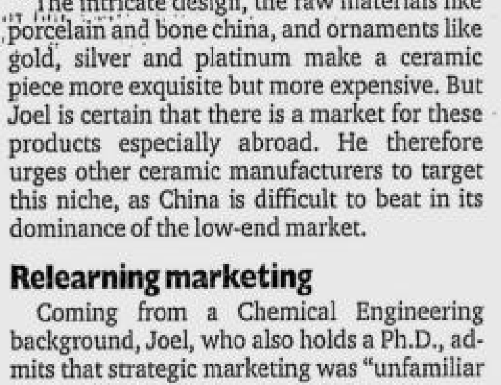
"We were very good at producing ceramics," he says, "but not in selling them and finding out what customers want. With that course, I learned the whole process of marketing our products."

For SMEs who want to join, rather than be swallowed up in globalization's train, Joel thinks strategic marketing is a must.

"It forces you to look at the opportunities. If you do the SWOT [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats] analysis, it pushes you think about how you are going to go about [the problem]. Instead of spur-of-the-moment decisions (where you just react to whatever comes) you have control over what you're going to do. If things don't turn out the way you planned it, at least you can go back to the plan. You're able to review and assess and make other plans or alternative choices."

The economy is very volatile these days but with strategic marketing, Custom Clay knows how to mold its success all the way to the future.

(UP ISSI's Strategic Marketing Course will have another run on Feb. 22-March 29 for six consecutive Saturdays. Please contact Tess Santos at 926-6316 and 9287076 to 79 local 165 or register online at www.up.edu.ph/~issi.)



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Vinegar saves mammals from extinction

VIE and Basil Reyes

From page C8

collection, as the mangangarit would cut the stalk where the sap would drip. The mangangarit would collect the sweet sap in the morning and the sour sap in the evening, climbing as high as 7 meters using bamboo poles.

The sap is collected using a bamboo container known as the *tukil*.

The sweet sap is then placed in vitrified earthen jars or *tapayans* used for fermentation and covered by a *katsa* or cheesecloth to keep it clean, and by coconut leaves to keep the temperature low as the vinegar is fermented in the fields outside the house.

According to Vie, they only use the earthen jars from Vigan called Burnay.

Burnay jars

Like the kaong tree and the alamid, the craft of making the Burnay jars is also fast disappearing.

Only the Burnay jars are the earthen jars that could be used for fermenting the Arenga vinegar.

Fermentation of the vinegar inside the Burnay jars takes three to four weeks before it is taken to the plant. At the plant, aging takes another eight weeks to the least before the vinegar is finally bottled.

"We use a roll or pilfer-proof cap to seal the bottles," Basil said. "That's to keep up with the international standard and to keep the quality of the vinegar."

"We even monitor the individual samples of vinegar from each jar for microscopic and chemical analysis," Basil said.

"We do a lot of processing to make sure that every bottle of vinegar maintains its consistent flavor and quality."

According to Vie, unlike other vinegars, Arenga vinegar is all-natural. "There is absolutely no chemicals added to Arenga vinegar. It's all natural and pure. Not even water is added to it."

The vinegar comes in two blends. The first is the classic vinegar, which tastes sweet and sour, and later, the Rosemary, which is infused by rosemary herbs for a more sour taste.

Saving endangered species

Since the couple started the vinegar business, they have also taught the people of Indang the importance of the kaong tree and the alamid.

More aware now, Indang town folk have stopped killing the alamid. They have also participated in the couple's drive to preserve the kaong trees.

Happy Earth, a local nongovernment organization, recently formed the Arenga conservation initiative.

On Feb. 8, Dr. Domingo Madulid, Botany Department head of the National Museum, and mammologist Dr. Arlene Arboledas, known for her study of the Bohol tarsiers, headed the conservation initiative with representatives from different sectors.

Since the couple put up the Arenga vinegar in market, clients from all over the country, Los Angeles and Japan have started ordering the product.

Using their frosted bottles, Vie and Basil even used the real Arenga fiber as rope tied around the neck of the bottle in the packaging of the vinegar.

"The Vinegar Man who put up a vinegar museum in South Dakota has even invited us to put the Arenga vinegar in his museum after he tasted our vinegar," Basil said.

"It's not just any ordinary vinegar," Vie said.

"Although its perfect for adobo and dips, salads, and pickling, you can also drink it afterward. We use it as health drink mixed with honey. It can also be mixed with alcohol as a cocktail drink," he added.

The vinegar business is not just a business for the couple. A part of the cost of the product is allocated to the conservation of the kaong trees in Indang and the search for places in the country where the endangered palm tree can still be found.

"When we decided to go into the Arenga vinegar business, our hopes were not entirely on the business side," Vie said.

"We hope to maintain clean rivers, as well as to save the Arenga pinnata trees and the lives of those beautiful endangered animals that thrive in the kaong tree. And most importantly, we wanted to help the farmers' financial well-being," Vie added.

"Our hopes with Arenga vinegar is to make the conservation efforts in Indang successful," Basil said.

"If we become successful in Indang, we can replicate the project all over the country."

Tyson . . .

From page C3

share of how meat is actually sold in the meat case," Lee said.

This new marketing push comes at a time when Tyson as a company is struggling.

In the quarter that ended in December, earnings were down nearly 47 percent, hurt largely by an excess of meat in 2002, a drop in export sales to both top chicken buyer Russia and top beef buyer Japan, and high cattle prices.

The current quarter also looks weak with the company expecting earnings of 10 cents to 14 cents a share, down from 18 cents a year ago.

Also, Tyson's shares are trading at $9.40, down more than 25 percent from a year ago. In the longer term, analysts see improvement.

A drop in beef, pork and chicken production should allow meat companies to charge higher prices for meat and earn greater profits, said Christine McCracken, a food industry analyst with Midwest Research.

"With less meat you get some improvement on pricing and margins should look better as we head into the spring and summer," said McCracken, who maintain's a "buy" recommendation on Tyson's shares.

A trial is under way in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in which Tyson is fighting racketeering and immigration law charges growing out of a federal undercover investigation.

Government investigators allege Tyson knew its managers paid to have illegal aliens smuggled into the United States from Mexico and Central America to work in its plants.

Tyson has said company executives were unaware of the scheme. A guilty verdict could possibly result in forfeiture of ill-gotten gains.

Analysts doubt the trial presents a long-term burden for the company.

"It is a company that has taken these lumps before. This is nothing new to them," Duvick said.

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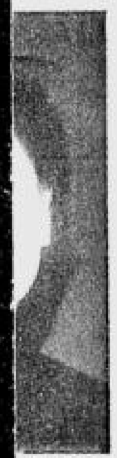
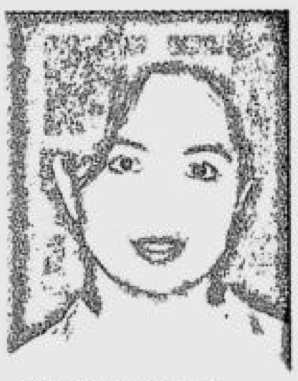


Winda Tan Gonzales
Tindalo NBO

Winston Duy
Durian NBO

Elvira Monzon
Aspen NBO

Gloria Avila
Market Dev


Frances Chua
Tindalo NBO

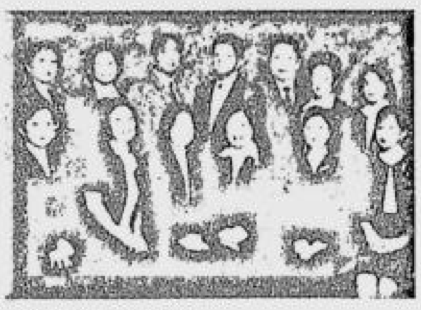
Genette Baylon
Birch NBO

, seated fourth from right

Tindalo NBO
Headed by: Winda Tan Gonzales, seated right

Chestnut NBO
Headed by: Estella Ng, second from upper right

uyut, seated left


Sequoia NBO
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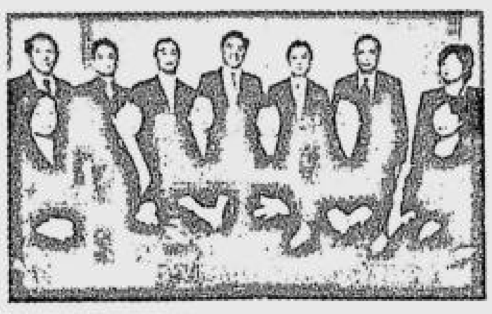
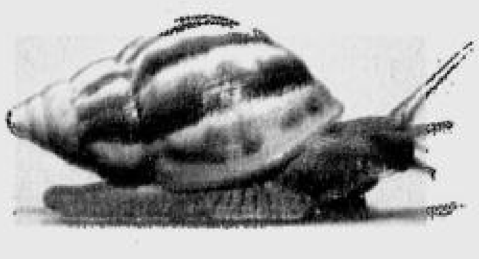

Durian NBO
Headed by: Alfredo Sy, third from upper right

*as of September 2002

Sun Life Financial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People, Events & Products

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Rolex hails winners of international awards

MARKING the 10th series of the Rolex Awards for Enterprise, Rolex has announced the winners of this global initiative – four men and one woman from Brazil, Canada, France, South Africa and the United States.

Each has received US$100,000 and a specially inscribed, gold Rolex chronometer at a recent gala ceremony in Tokyo where they were honored for their groundbreaking projects in the areas of science, the environment, exploration and cultural heritage. The five Laureates were selected from almost 1,400 applicants from 113 countries by an international panel of prominent scientists and explorers.

These Laureates, like the 45 Laureates who have preceded them since Rolex established the programme in 1976, represent diverse cultures and spheres of interest. This year's prize-winners are: Michel Andre, a French biologist who has created an innovative system to prevent collisions between whales and ships; Jose Marcio Ayres, a Brazilian forest ecologist who is spearheading the establishment of the world's biggest rainforest corridor by involving local residents; Dave Irvine-Halliday, a Canadian electrical engineer who is supplying inexpensive lighting systems to homes and schools in developing countries; Lindy Rodwell, a South African zoologist who is preserving cranes and their habitats throughout central and southern Africa, as well as the lifestyle of the local people; and Gordon Sato, an eminent, retired American cellular and molecular biologist who is helping the people of Eritrea establish agriculture based on mangroves.

"Despite the diversity inherent in the Rolex Awards, the Laureates all have in common the spirit of enterprise that underpins the programme," said Mr Patrick Heiniger, chief executive officer of Rolex S.A. and chair of the selection committee. "Whether saving whales or endangered birds, improving living standards in remote villages, safeguarding our precious rainforests, or developing low-tech agricultural methods in one of the world's most impoverished countries, these five individuals have demonstrated their intent to improve our planet and the human condition – the underlying objective of the awards."

Seeking new applicants: In June this year, Rolex invited applications from enterprising men and women the world over for the 11th Awards cycle, the 2004 Rolex Awards. The biennial programme provides financial support and global recognition to visionary and dedicated individuals whose ongoing working projects are original and feasible, and have a positive impact on the surrounding community and beyond.

In addition to the prizes awarded to the 2002 Laureates, five Associate Laureates will each receive US$35,000 and a steel-and-gold Rolex chronometer. These runners-up will be honored with presentations in their own countries in the months ahead.

The 2002 Associate Laureates, three men and two women, are: Sebastian Chuwa (Tanzania); Ilse Kohler-Rollefson (Germany); Makoto Murase (Japan); Martha Ruiz Corzo (Mexico); and Geoffrey Summers (United Kingdom). Their projects range from saving the camels in the Indian state of Rajasthan to applying innovative archaeological methods to map and explore and Iron-Age city in Turkey. Makoto Murase, the Japanese Associate Laureate who was singled out for his project to recycle rainfall in cities, joined the Laureates at Tokyo's 23rd October ceremony.

Selection process: Each of the award-winning projects was studied and discussed by the independent, voluntary jury, the 2002 selection committee, ten experts whose own spirit of enterprise is exemplary. "The jury members were particularly sensitive to environmental issues this year," reported Mr Heiniger. "They were impressed by the importance the winning candidates placed on local people living and working in harmony with nature in order to ensure sustainable development."

Joining Mr Heiniger on the 2002 selection committee were Dr. Juan Luis Arsuaga, Spanish paleoanthropologist and biologist; Laurence de la Ferriere, French alpinist and explorer; Dr. Laila El-Hamamsy, cultural anthropologist from Egypt; Baroness Susan Greenfield, British neuroscientist; Liu Thai Ker, Singaporean architect-planner and environmentalist; Fumihiko Maki, Japanese architect; professor Chie Nakane, Japanese social anthropologist; Dr. Oscar Rodriguez, explorer and sports physician from Mexico; Dr. Anatomy M. Sagalevitch, Russian oceanologist and pioneer explorer of deep oceans, and Dr. Neil de Grass Tyson, an American astrophysicist.

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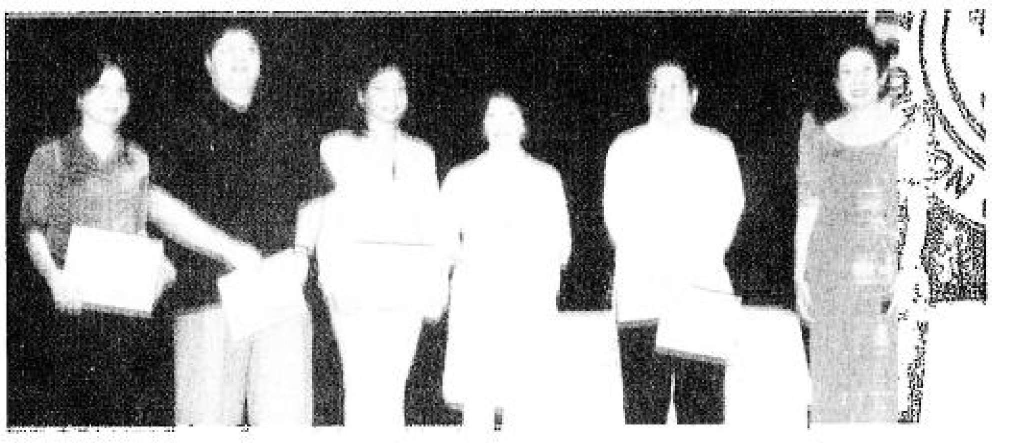
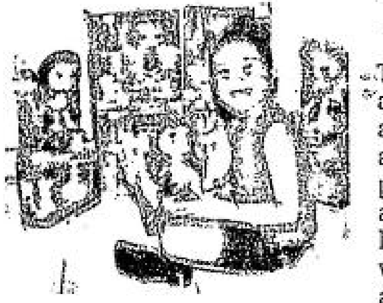
Vamsler Philippines Inc., a national pharmaceutical company, recently held its Ninth Annual National Sales Conference last Feb. 1 at Tagaytay Country Hotel. Led by Mr Rudy Roberto, marketing manager and Ms Vinia de Guzman, general manager, the affair was marked with plan presentations, training lectures and culminated with the awarding of recognition to outstanding peformers. Major awards were received by Mr Mark Coz (PSR of the Year) and Mr Raymond Sierra (DM of the Year-2nd place). Slogan for this year is 'Vamsler 2003..Make a Difference..Aim for Excellence..Victory A Destiny.'



CHI RHO AWARD

JRS Express was given the Chi Rho Award recently by Miriam College for its 11th year supporting the Environmental Center of Miriam-Peace. Proudly displaying the certificate with other awardees is Nene Manalo of JRS Express (4th from left) after receiving it from Patricia B. Licuanan, (1st from right) president of Miriam College. JRS Express and Miriam College have been partners in environmental conservation for the past 11 years.

GROOVADELIC PLAY FASHION BY DIVASTARZ



Go grab your very own 'hi-techi-delic' diva. Collect Alexa, Summer and Nikki with their interactive and plush dolls. Check out the cool features of their interactive dolls that have sensors to recognize dive outfits. It has internal clocks for diva activity reminders, microphones that listen to kids and give voice reactions. They also got sensors that respond to hairstyling and head patterns, and yes or no buttons as interaction tools. And that's not all. These divas have their own apparel and accessories collections. Wear those groveadelic outfits and accessorize like your own favorite Divastarz. It's so cool and fun. Divastarz dolls, licensed apparel and accessories are now available in all leading toy stores and department stores nationwide. Exclusively distributed by Richwell Trading Corporation, #25 Quezon Ave. QC.

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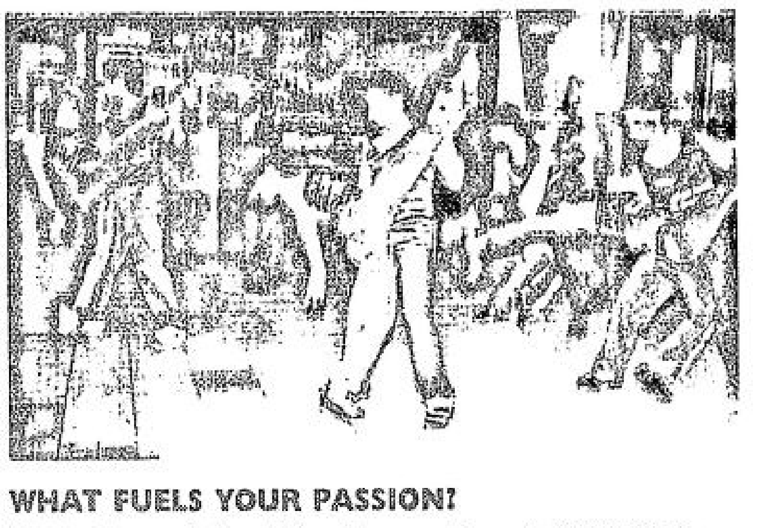
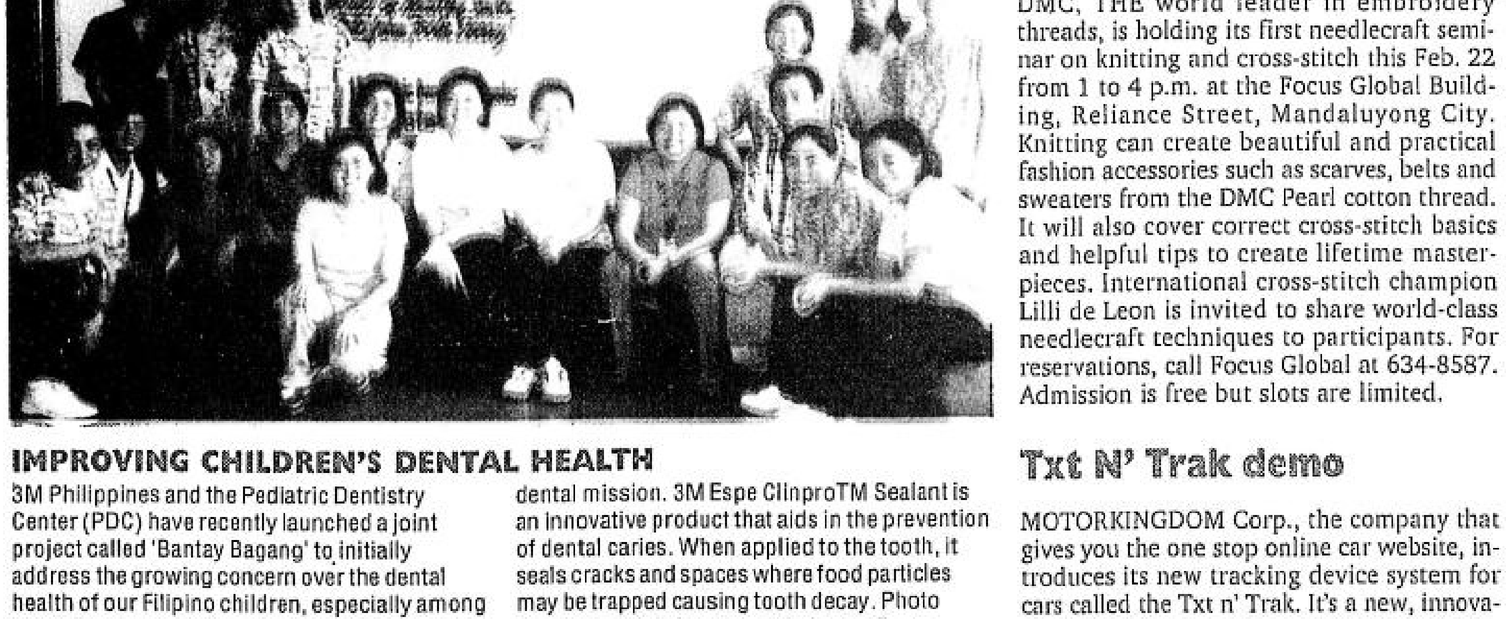


WHAT FUELS YOUR PASSION?

Whiplash dancers in blue shirts and jeans emblazoned with 'What fuels your passion?' are causing a stir in several commercial centers in Manila when they perform short choreographed 'passion-filled' dance numbers. They have been sighted in Eastwood-Libis, Malate and Greenbelt 1 Makati. After their number, dancers gave away tattoo stickers, believed to be the logo of a new fuel to be introduced by Shell.



IMPROVING CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH

3M Philippines and the Pediatric Dentistry Center (PDC) have recently launched a joint project called 'Bantay Bagang' to initially address the growing concern over the dental health of our Filipino children, especially among the less fortunate ones who do not have access to proper dental care. Volunteer dentists from PDC treated children from Bantay Bata 163 and other affiliate foundations with 3M Espe ClinproTM Sealant during the recent 2-day dental mission. 3M Espe ClinproTM Sealant is an innovative product that aids in the prevention of dental caries. When applied to the tooth, it seals cracks and spaces where food particles may be trapped causing tooth decay. Photo shows the PDC dentists with the 3M Espe marketing team after the Bantay Bagang activity. This activity is one of the series of projects that 3M Espe Dental Division will be undertaking in the promotion of dental health.

DMC holds needlecraft seminars

DMC, THE world leader in embroidery threads, is holding its first needlecraft seminar on knitting and cross-stitch this Feb. 22 from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Focus Global Building, Reliance Street, Mandaluyong City. Knitting can create beautiful and practical fashion accessories such as scarves, belts and sweaters from the DMC Pearl cotton thread. It will also cover correct cross-stitch basics and helpful tips to create lifetime masterpieces. International cross-stitch champion Lilli de Leon is invited to share world-class needlecraft techniques to participants. For reservations, call Focus Global at 634-8587. Admission is free but slots are limited.

Txt N' Trak demo

MOTORKINGDOM Corp., the company that gives you the one stop online car website, introduces its new tracking device system for cars called the Txt n' Trak. It's a new, innovative, revolutionary device that generates text messages from your car to your GSM mobile phone via Global Positioning System (GPS). Txt n' Trak further extends its features and services by providing its customers the accuracy in tracking their vehicles nationwide; security and prevention from carnapping, kidnapping, or holdups, and assistance in case of emergencies such as road accidents and towing assistance. Its advance features are cargo door sensor and emergency button facility that will definitely protect and save your car. There will be a demo and presentation of Txt N' Trak at the Manila Golf and Country Club at 5 p.m. on Feb. 26. Call 899-9821/19.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS GROUP

PAG AT FAMILY MEETING

40 personnel of the public affairs group (AFPRescom) led by their group commander Col. J. Cabarrus and NCR commander Col. E. Lacanienta were assigned for duty at the 4th World Meeting of Families held at the Rizal Park last Jan. 25 to 26. Assisting people with first aid and medical treatment as well as assisting in finding the parents of children who got lost. Photo shows the group in front of their first aid tent center.

'Feast From The East' at JMK February

BEING Filipinos and Asians, our food preferences naturally ensure a special place in our hearts for the wonderfully delicious variety of cooking styles, dishes and flavors that are distinctive to our region.

Our own Filipino cooking is blessed with a delightful range of culinary influences derived from our neighbors, and these are so much a part of our food experiences that we consider them our own. Indeed, Filipino food fare is a fascinating showcase of influences from different Asian countries.

As we celebrate the month of hearts, the Julius Maggi Kitchen offers "Feast From The East," a free culinary session that offers a mouth-watering tour of Chinese, Thai and Malaysian Cuisine, to be conducted by chef Kim Ngo of the Center for Culinary Arts Manila. The second part of each session will delve into knowledge about the healing power of Oriental medicine, as shared by an acupuncture specialist. This special Valentine session is scheduled on Feb. 11, 13, 15, 18 and 22.

Each session will be held on the above dates from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Julius Maggi Kitchen, ground floor, Nestle Center, 31 Plaza Drive, Rockwell Center Makati City. For reservations, call 726-9232 or 726-1016.

Invite a friend and bring labels of Maggi Tomato and Meat Cubes, Nestle Lemonade and Maggi Sinigang sa Sampalok na may Gabi. This will entitle you to a chance to win special prizes in the Nestle Bring a Friend, Lucky Labels, and Buy and Win promos. Ask for details when making your reservations.

Also in February, the Julius Maggi Kitchen offers the following classes featuring Henry Sison: Feb. 6 – Parade of Torts and Cheesecakes; and Feb. 26 – Art of Sandwich-making. For fees, reservations and inquiries about these classes, call 726-5316.

HOM new volunteers orientation

ARE YOU interested in getting involved as a volunteer? Come to Hands On Manila's New Volunteers Orientation on Feb. 24, 6 p.m. at the lobby of The Podium and learn how you can make a difference. The orientation is designed to inform individuals and groups about Hands On Manila's volunteer programs and projects. HOM can show you how easy it is to get involved as a volunteer, through volunteer opportunities that suit your interests and schedule. For details, call 843-7044 and 843-5231, or e-mail homla@info.com.ph and handsonmla@edsamail.com.ph.

SUYEN Corp. (makers of Bench) president Virgilio Lim and Globe Telecom sales and distribution head Lizanne Uychaco

Phone firm ties up with local retailer

KEY officials of Globe and Bench held a luncheon recently to formalize the first of what is expected to be a series of partnerships that aim to provide customers with a bigger bundle of benefits. It was a casual, Valentine-inspired affair attended by Globe Telecom wireless business group head Ferdinand dela Cruz, Suyen Corp. (makers of Bench) president Virgilio Lim, Globe Telecom sales and distribution head Lizanne Uychaco, Suyen Corp. general manager Bryan Lim, and Globe Telecom sales channel head for business centers Noel Cortez.

Globe Telecom Business Center is currently offering a promo in which Globe users who get a new postpaid subscription or purchase a Globe or Touch Mobile prepaid SIM pack or phone kit are given a coupon that can be redeemed for a free Baby Bench cologne at Bench outlets nationwide. The promo runs the whole month of February.

Dela Cruz said Globe and Bench have a good fit because both are youthful, vibrant, fun and energetic brands. "Consumers today want value for money and they are also conscious of which brands fit their lifestyle," he said. He noted that there has been a high redemption rate since the offer began last Jan. 26 and it is expected to pick up even more in the coming weeks.

The Globe-Bench partnership was clinched through the efforts of a dynamic young team led by Raya Roa, head of Globe Telecom Retail Marketing; Patty Forbes, senior manager-Globe Telecom retail marketing and Dale dela Cruz, Baby Bench cologne group product manager.

DESPITE HYPERMARTS

'Sari-sari' stores are here to stay

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THE THAI government found itself in the middle of a big controversy last year when it drafted a law to restrict the business of foreign-owned retailing companies in the country.

The law was proposed because foreign firms took away half of the market from the local retail players such as groceries and supermarkets.

The Thai government has since dropped the plans but it showed how foreign players, with their stronger financial muscle and longer experience in the supermarket and grocery industries, could take over the business of local players that do not keep pace with global developments.

Robina Gokongwei-Pe, senior vice president of the Robinson's Supermarkets group, said that the decision of the Philippine government to liberalize the retail industry is something that the local industry would have to accept.

"The entry of foreign competition makes us improve ourselves. It is something we have to accept so we are challenged to match the standards of foreign companies so that we would retain our hold of the market," Gokongwei-Pe said.

The Robinsons Supermarket group is one of the leading players in the market with 11 branches nationwide. It is part of the Robinsons Retail Group, which has numerous retail formats under its supervision such as convenience store, drug store, hypermarket and hardware store.

Robinsons Supermarket has been in the industry for more than 30 years and recently become a member of the International Grocers Alliance.

Its typical customer is a housewife belonging to the B and C markets between the ages of 26 and 40.

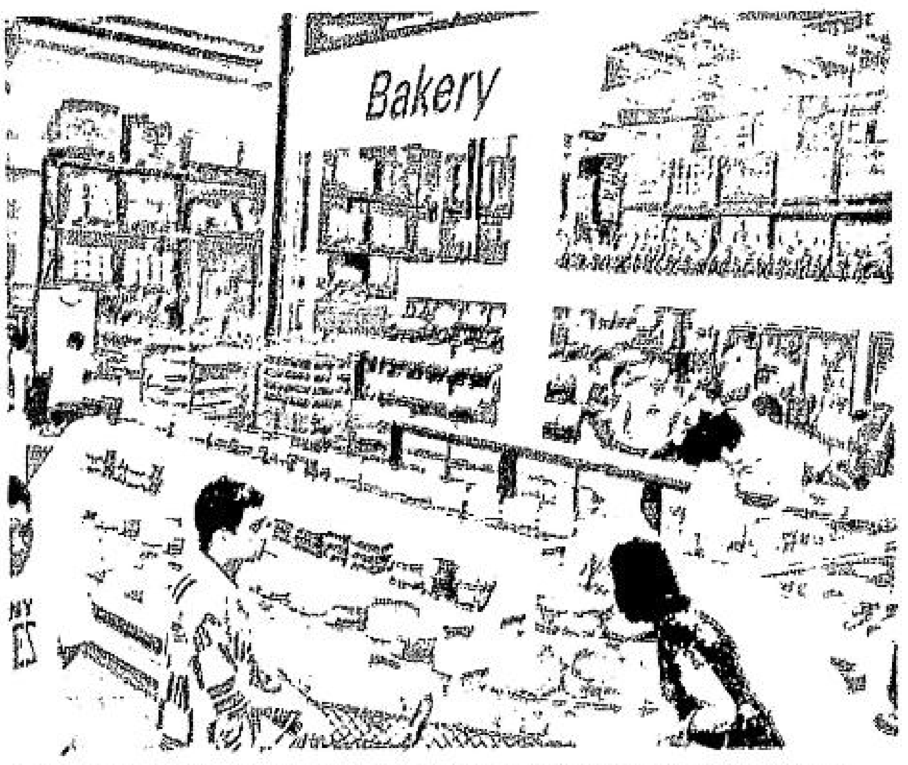
Although there are big players in the country, the Philippines, however, is still very much dominated by the *sari-sari* stores in number. In terms of volume however, the market is cornered by big retail players such as the Shoemart group of Henry Sy, the Gokongwei's Robinsons Supermarkets and then the Rustans group which includes the Shopwise group.

The local grocery industry is considered a prime target for foreign investors because of the huge local population of over 80 million people. The mom-and-pop and wet markets continue to thrive but retailers see a trend toward more upscale grocery concepts as incomes rise.

A number of foreign retailers such as Carrefour and the Casino group have previously expressed plans to invest in the local market but so far only the PriceSmart group from the United States, the Makro group and most recently the Watson's group have actually put in money.

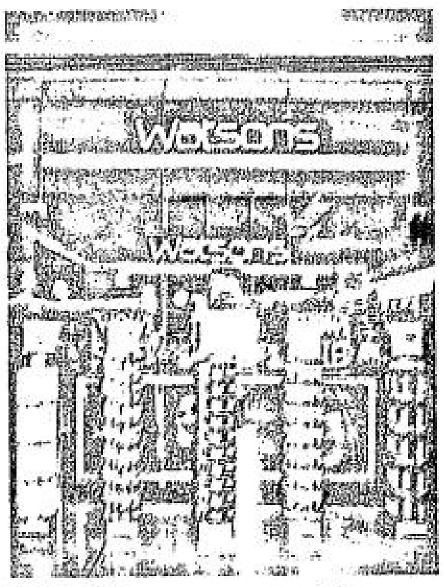
PriceSmart has four outlets so far under a joint venture with a group of local businessmen, Makro continues to expand through its joint venture with the local Ayala group; while Watson's entered into a joint venture with the Shoemart group to develop the convenience/drug store concept in the malls.

Benjamin Woods, PriceSmart senior vice president for Asia, said in a separate interview that it invested in the Philippines following the liberalization of the retail industry because it believes in the potential of the market.



LOCAL firms had to shape up to withstand competition with the entry of foreign retailers.

"We are not exactly a supermarket but about half of our sales are in the food category and it continues to be strong bringing in 70 percent of our sales," Woods said.



WATSONS, a new entrant to RP

He said the market for the grocery items is very competitive, driving prices and margins down which is good for the Philippine consumer.

"I think competition should be welcomed because whenever a foreign retailer comes in, it raises the bar which means better standards for the market," Woods added.

A recent 2002 ShopperTrends Asia Special study by research and consultancy firm AC Nielsen showed that proper location would continue to be a major driving force in determining where the discriminating Filipino consumer would go.

The survey, which studied shopping behavior across key urban centers in seven countries including the Philippines, showed that location is the single most important influence on shopping behavior across Asia Pacific, outstripping all other factors whenever people decide to spend money.

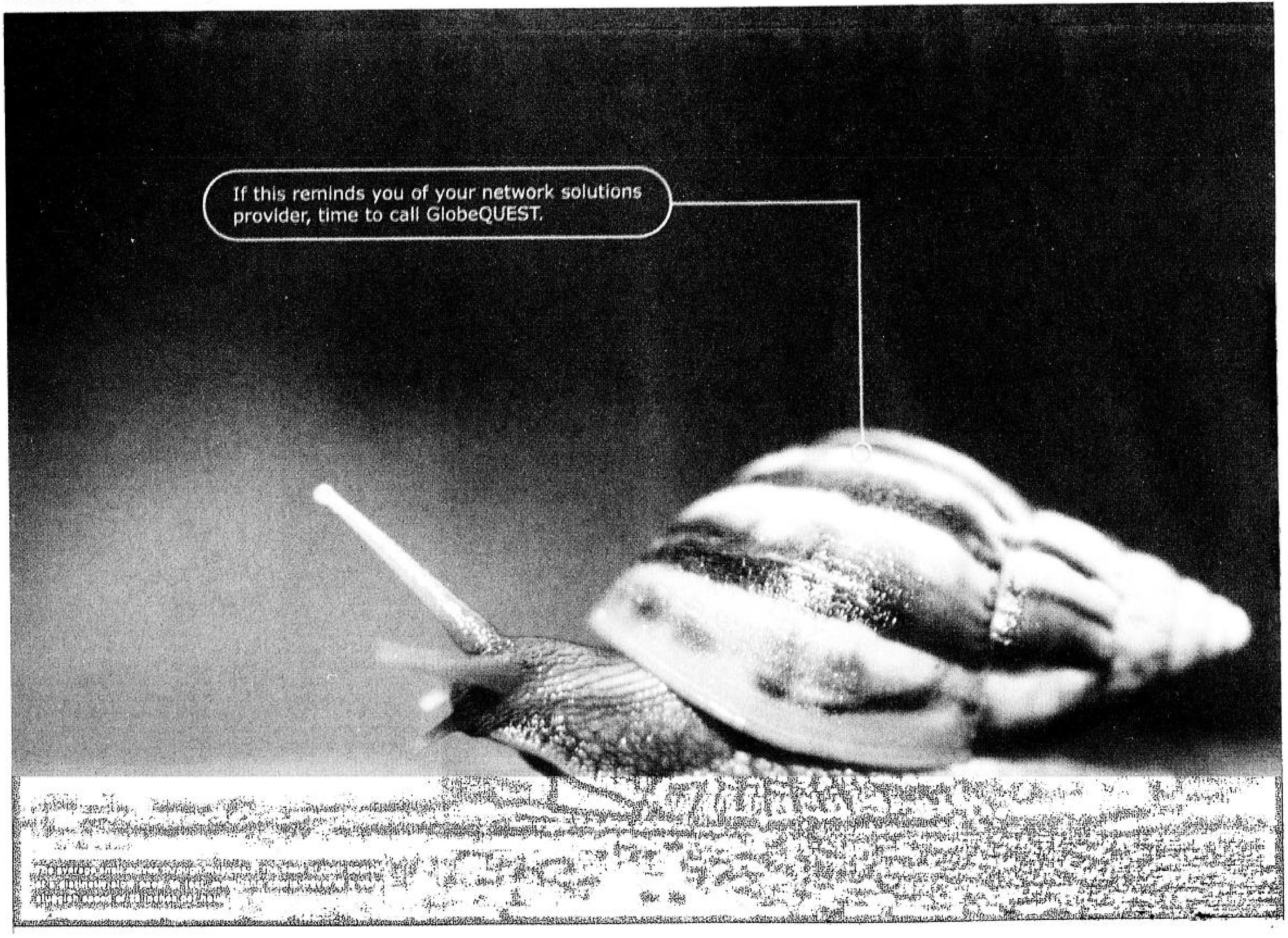
Other major reasons given by consumers for choosing where they shop are price, product availability, store environment and the quality of fresh food.

The study, however, also showed that there is still a long way to go before consumers change their fresh food buying habits with between 80 percent to 90 percent still visiting wet markets on a regular basis.

"Less than 30 percent of shoppers in South East Asian countries use the modern trade to meet their fresh food requirements, an area of opportunity most chains are still grappling with," the study said.

"Alongside the wet market, the traditional mom-and-pop grocery store is also a long way from being extinct. It remains an important outlet throughout the region, with 80 percent of shoppers visiting at least once in four weeks in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand," the study added.

It is for these reasons that supermarket groups work at introducing innovations to keep competition at bay.



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GLOBE TELECOM

Vinegar saves mammals from extinction

By Mei Magsino
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

INDANG, Cavite—From the lowly *sukang irok* or sugar palm vinegar that is being peddled in the streets of this town, a couple formerly engaged in the frosted bottling business discovered a gold mine that changed the meaning of vinegar and helped save endangered mammals.

Arenga vinegar from a variety of sugar palm tree known as *kaong* or *irok* (*Arenga pinnata*) is now bottled into frosted bottles sealed with roll and pilfer-proof caps and has already reached as far as Los Angeles and Japan. It was the preferred vinegar of the international chefs who joined the recently held "chefs on parade" in Manila.

Sukang irok

But Vie and Basil Reyes, owners of Bote Central Inc., the company that develops and bottles the vinegar, have more and bigger plans to sustain the vinegar business that revives history and could save the endangered palm civets (*Paradoxorus hermaphroditus*) or locally known as alamid, the musang (*Paradoxorus philipinesis*) and the cloud rats.

"With Arenga vinegar, we also hope to change the culture of vinegar into a delicious drink that can be displayed on the dinner table like wines," Vie said, as she finished her glass of vinegar juice.

Arenga vinegar mixed with honey and ice makes a good tasting energy and drink. The juice tastes like a perfect blend of pineapple, orange, mango and passion fruit juice that has been stored for a long time.

"In the morning, you can have Arenga vinegar as a health drink as it really will energize you," Basil said. "But in the evening, mixed with vodka, it's now called 'let's drink'."

The couple had been in the frosted bottling business for eight years. In fact, the former company, Braveheart Inc., was the only company in the Philippines that made frosted bottles for a liquor company. A local perfume company also bought the small frosted bottles.

THE ALAMID helps grow the kaong tree

But when the two companies stopped ordering frosted bottles two years ago, the couple started searching for a business where they could still use the equipment, plant and the machines they invested on for the frosted bottling business.

"Last year, we were really in the lowest low when Vie and I passed by Indang and saw a peddler of sukang irok on the highway," Basil said. "We bought some vinegar and were impressed when we discovered where it came from."

For two months, the couple studied the vinegar, processed it, and bottled it into frosted bottles.

ARENGA: World's only sugar palm vinegar

The couple had found a new business.

Only sugar palm vinegar

Vie and Basil discovered to their amazement that what they had found in town was the world's only sugar palm vinegar from the kaong tree.

It takes the tree 10 to 15 years before it can be tapped for its sweet sap used in making the vinegar.

The Arenga pinnata tree has a life cycle of about 15 to 22 years. If propagated by man, the tree has a shorter life span.

In Indang, the abundance of sugar palm trees is mainly due to its natural propagators, which are the alamid, musang and the cloud rats.

The alamid climbs up the tree, eats the kaong fruit, goes down and excretes the seeds into the ground. From the kaong seeds that have been exposed to the alamid's stomach enzymes, the trees grow healthier and longer.

Unfortunately, like the Arenga pinnata, their numbers are diminishing as they are caught for pets, sold, or worse, some local folks would even kill the alamid and cook it for *pulutan*.

The cloud rat, also an endangered species that is only found in the Philippines, also uses the tree as its habitat.

Price of urbanization

The kaong trees used to abound in the ravines of Cavite—from Carmona to the towns of Mendez and Alfonso. But urbanization has greatly diminished their numbers.

Vie and Basil found a thriving colony of kaong trees only in Indang, where natural springs provide them with water.

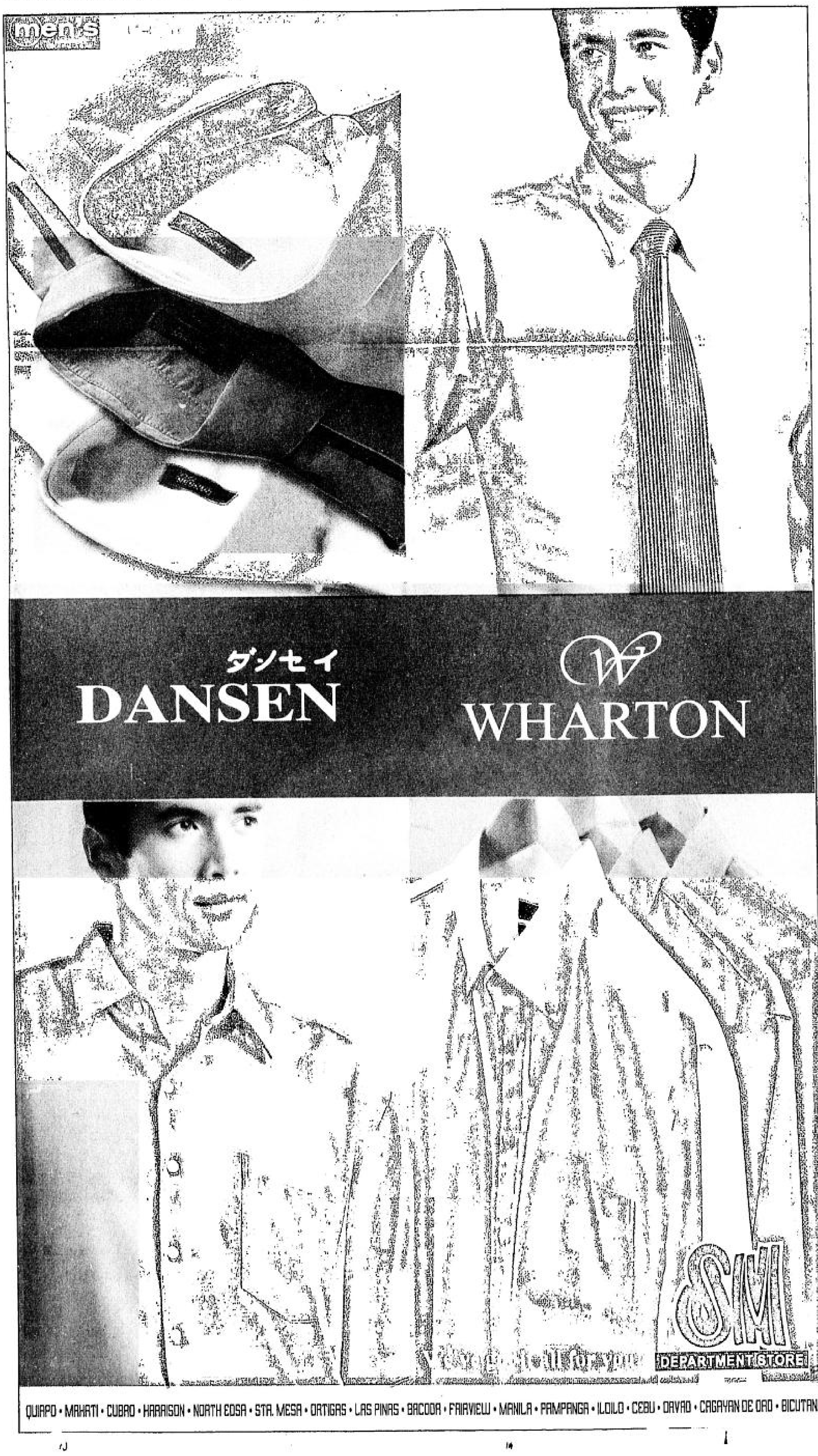
The couple started buying vinegar since March last year. At first it was not easy for them to buy the sukang irok but became easier as they made friends.

Another difficulty was the fact that only a few *mangangarit* (palm tree caretaker) are still engaged in the job of getting the sweet sap of the kaong's flowers that is used for making the vinegar.

Collecting the sweet sap of the kaong tree is never easy. A mangangarit has to check and rock the flowering stalk once everyday until the flowers bloom and attract hundreds of fruit flies.

Only then will the flowering stalk be ready for tapping and

VINEGAR/ C5



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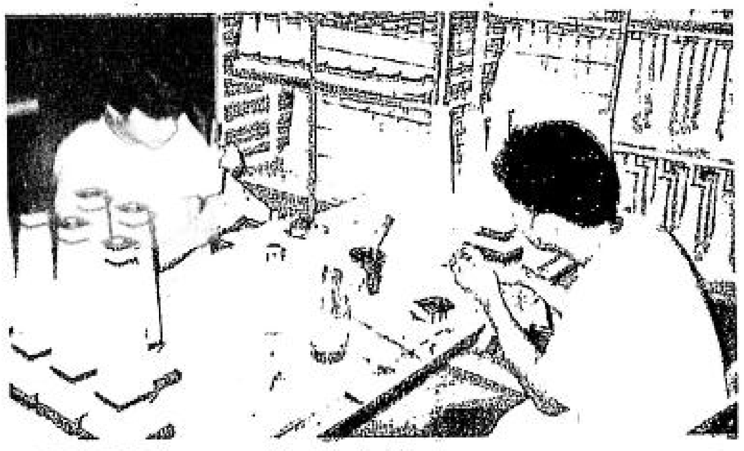


A BUSINESS that started from a hobby.

Ceramics firm turns threats into opportunities

By Ian Jester de Vera
Contributor

MARKETING STRATEGY

FOR MOST small and medium enterprises, globalization has suddenly put them up against not just the businessman across the street or in the next town or city but from from every corner of the globe.

Add to this the unpredictably changing consumer habits and you get a small businessman hard pressed to survive, much more to grow.

Custom Clay Inc. is one of these intrepid small enterprises that have not only endured but managed to grow bigger in a season of turmoil.

The company that began as a manufacturer and exporter of earthenware in 1994 traces its roots to its mother company, Arte Ceramica Corp., which only started as a hobby of Dioscora Amante of San Pedro, Laguna.

After taking a course on ceramic making with a Japanese volunteer who was assigned to the Philippines, Dioscora began selling her wares to her friends. When it became clear that a market exists for her products, she started expanding the business. With the support of her family, she opened Arte Ceramica Corp. in the middle of the '80s.

What used to be a hobby was now a full-blown business. It initially catered to banks for their souvenirs and eventually started selling to leading department stores.

It received its major break when, as a member of the Ceramic Export Manufacturers Association (Crema), it participated in an exhibit in Frankfurt, Germany. The exposure opened the opportunity to export Arte Ceramica products for the first time.

Slowly, the company gained a strong foothold in the United States and European markets. Before long the company was swamped with orders from both local and foreign buyers. Consequently, a son, Joel Amante, was forced to start a business of his own to take care of excess orders. Thus, Custom Clay Inc. was born.

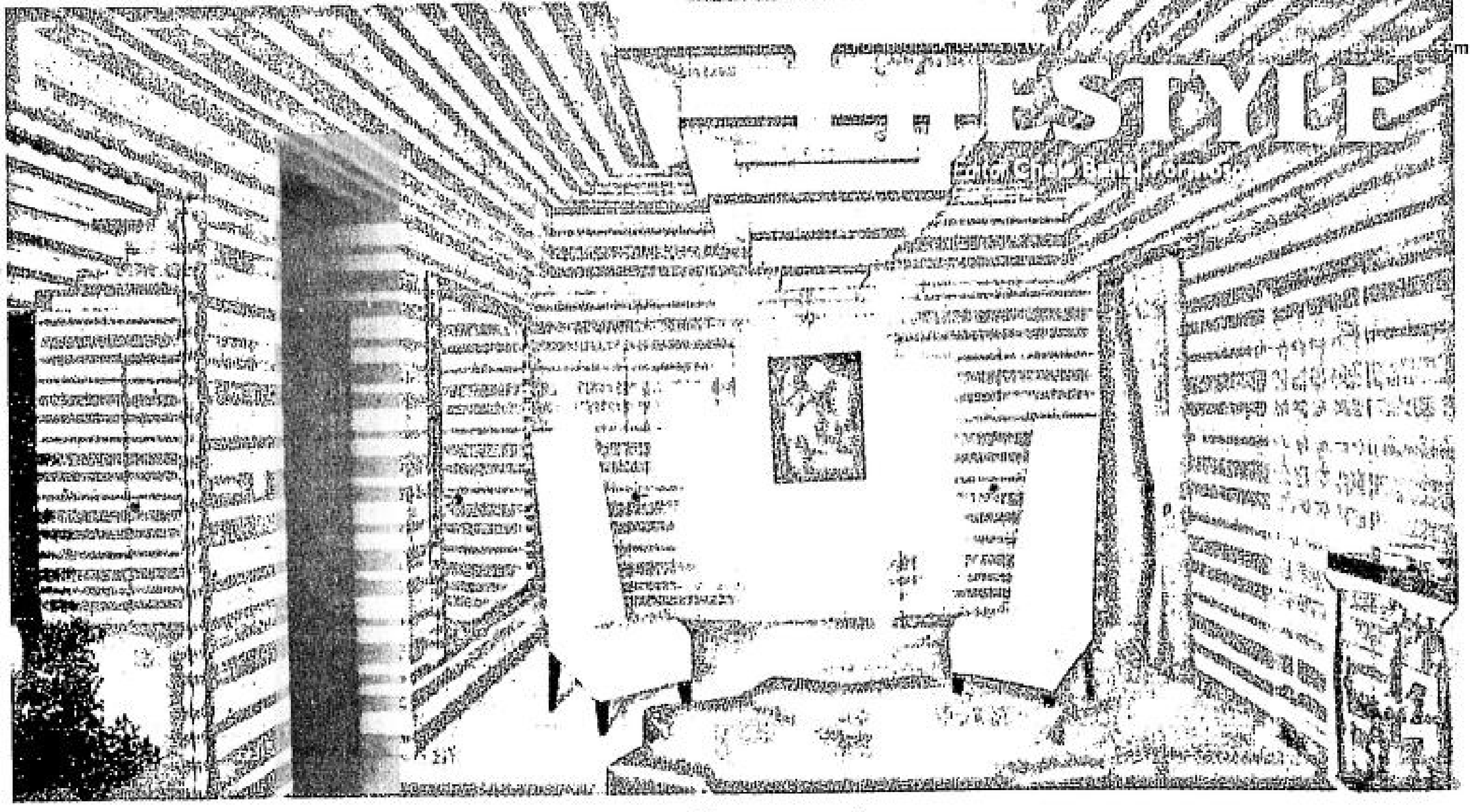
At first, the new company imported its raw material, special high-quality clay from Taiwan. In the late '90s, a Taiwanese company started manufacturing the clay here in the Philippines, thus making it possible to source the material locally.

At the peak of its exporting operations, Custom Clay was selling 90 percent of its output to foreign buyers. In the second half of the 1990s, however, China entered the picture and dominated the market. It was then that the company adopted a strong local marketing thrust, while still maintaining a substantial share in the international market, Joel recalls.

One of the first steps he took was to open a retail store in 1997. The Custom Clay Shop, a factory outlet in San Pedro, Laguna, has since become the leading mall-based retailer of quality ceramic wares. Soon more outlets were put up in leading shopping malls in Metro Manila.

Although the store initially specialized in hand-painted earthenware, it has since expanded its merchandise to include all kinds of ceramics such as bone china, terra cotta, porcelain and stoneware. It has

CERAMICS/ C4



STRIPED ZONE. The living room with walls and doors painted end-to-end with horizontal stripes in bright yellow and orange.

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A partyphile's private venue

2bU! columnist Tim Yap's place has as much exuberance, flamboyance and attitude as any of his events

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Chito Vecina

THE COLORS of the rainbow weren't enough for INQUIRER's resident paparazzi and party columnist Tim Yap. With the help of a few interior designer-friends, the self-styled "eventologist" of the 2bU! generation used almost every imaginable hue to refashion a brand-new, three-bedroom condo unit into a sanctuary worthy of his flamboyant personality and swinging lifestyle.

To imbibe Yap's pulsating party energy, one need not go beyond the foyer, with its avocado-green walls accented on one side with white, retro-inspired woodwork fashioned into a series of circles.

After a walk through the forest, as Yap puts it, one is ushered into sunshine: a spacious living room with walls and doors painted end-to-end with horizontal stripes of bright yellow and orange.

Over the rainbow

"I believe in the power of colors and how they affect one's moods," says Yap, who had been reading a book on colors just before he began collaborating with sisters Ivy and Cynthia Almario of Atelier Almario sometime last year. "That's why I went beyond the colors of the rainbow to evoke certain moods."

The powder room's floor and walls, for instance, are painted in fuchsia, while its ceiling glows in gold. Another bathroom adopted a purple-and-gold color scheme. For a change, Yap chose cool turquoise in favor of hot orange in the dining room-cum-kitchen.

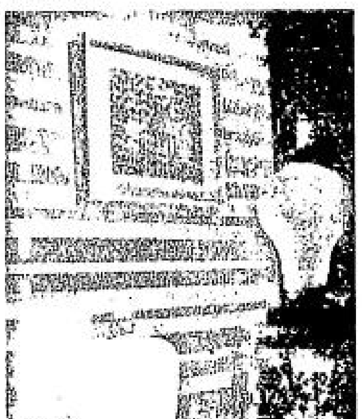
Such a whimsical approach, however, involved a painstaking process of trial and error that took four months to finish. And that's not counting the planning phase.

Yap also sought the assistance of good friends Tessa Prieto-Valdes and Juan Miguel Ongsiako in remodeling certain areas of the house.

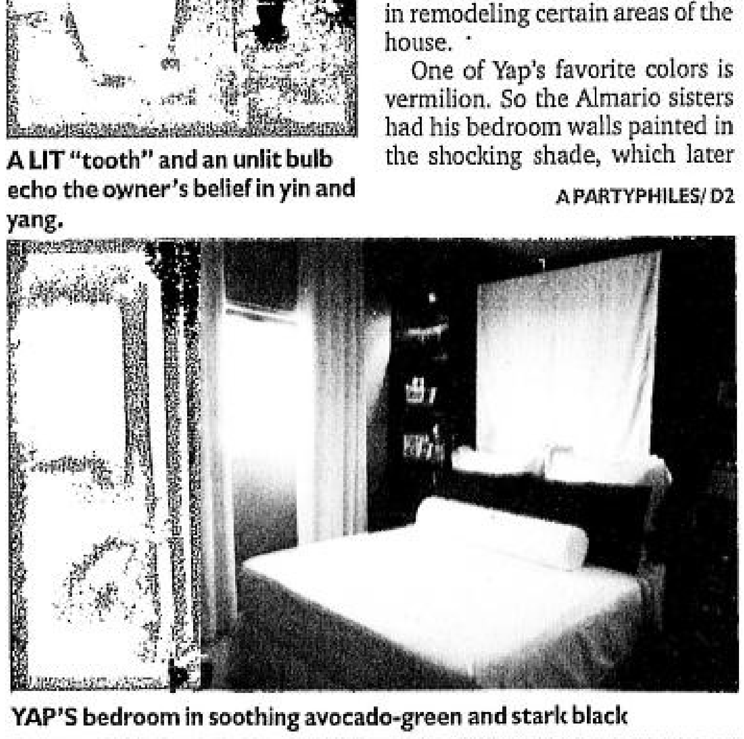
One of Yap's favorite colors is vermilion. So the Almario sisters had his bedroom walls painted in the shocking shade, which later

A PARTYPHILES/ D2

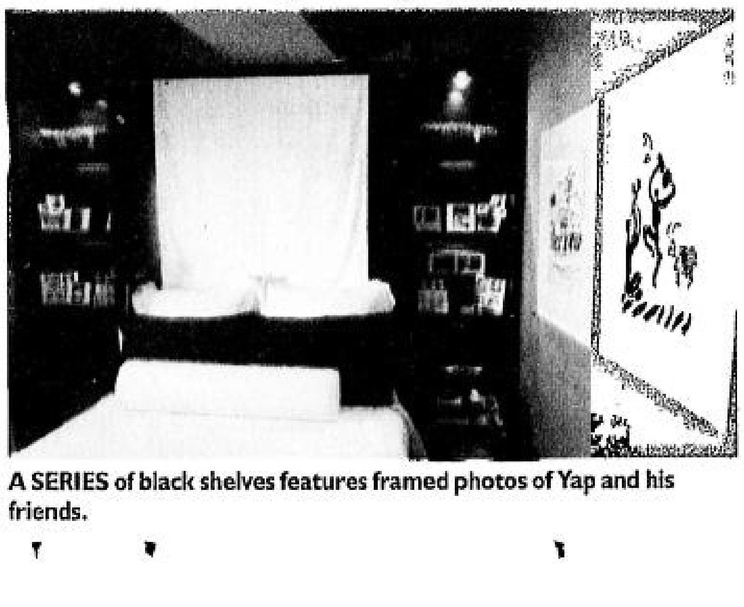
A VINTAGE cabinet showcases curio pieces from various parts of the world.



A LIT "tooth" and an unlit bulb echo the owner's belief in yin and yang.



YAP'S bedroom in soothing avocado-green and stark black



A SERIES of black shelves features framed photos of Yap and his friends.

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DOZENS upon dozens of Yap's shoes

A DRESSING room fit for a diva

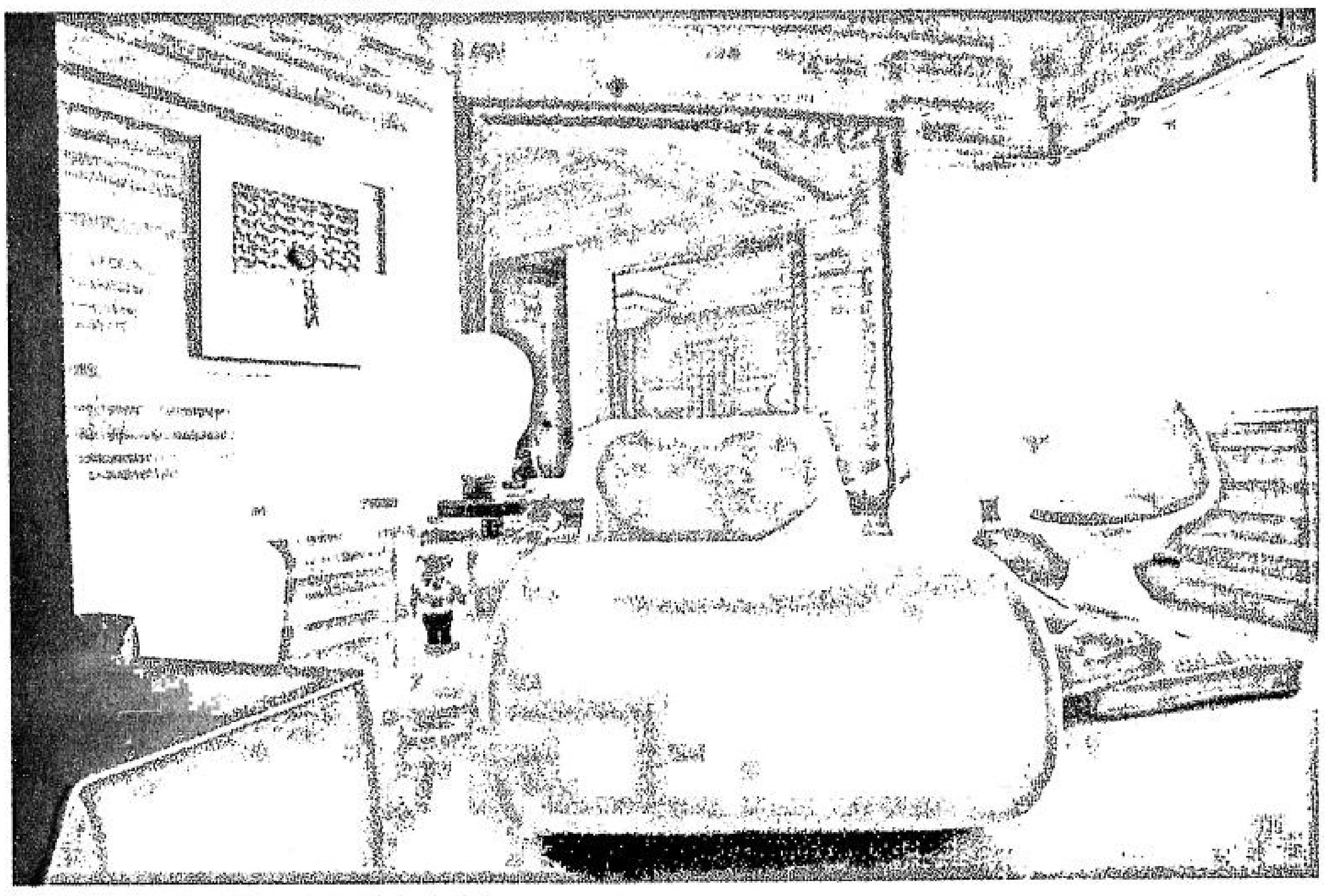
A partyphile's private venue

From page D1

proved to be too "strong" for him. He finally settled for soothing avocado-green, accented with black built-in wooden shelves and side tables.

Opposite the bed is a huge white photo canvas made of cushioned leatherette and crisscrossed with black ribbons. There in black-and-white glory is Tim himself in various poses. A series of framed photographs by Herb Ritts featuring the human form borders both sides of the photo canvas.

'I might burst into flames had I insisted on sleeping in a red room'



A LEATHER divan from Kish and several plastic chairs are very retro.

Peace and quiet

"I'm a fiery person myself," Yap reasons. "I might burst into flames had I insisted on sleeping in a red room. I finally realized that I needed a soothing place to retire to at the end of the day, to help me decompress."

That's why the lone TV set in the house is hidden in the maid's quarters. Yap gets his inspiration, he says, from the real world, not from images on the boob tube.

"I don't need the added stimulation after being stimulated all day," he reasons. "It feels good to come home to a place that offers peace and quite."

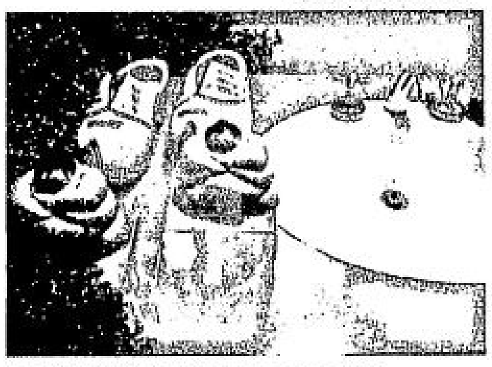
Tim knew the importance of proper lighting in bringing out the right mood in each room, so he tapped Ongsiako's expertise.

Mirror, mirror

For her part, fellow clotheshorse and interior designer Prieto-Valdes transformed the unit's master bedroom into a giant closet and dressing room with large mirrors on all sides, including the opposite wall.

"I can see myself from all angles no matter where I look," he says. Divas of the world, eat your hearts out!

Prieto-Valdes limited the color scheme in the dressing room to red and white. The floor resembles flashes of wall-to-wall lightning. To achieve such an effect, she had the parquet floor sand-papered and stripped of its varnish before having it painted with alternate streaks of contrasting shades.



WHIMSICAL bathroom accessories

GEOMETRIC shelves complement the "couture" carpet in the office.

Despite Yap's reputation as a fastidious and unpredictable dresser, a sense of order surprisingly reigns in his dressing room.

Color coded

Clothes of every imaginable print, color, cut and material are neatly hung on a long metal rod. Socks, belts, bags, hankies, neckties and underwear are stored separately in opaque plastic drawers. A series of white shelves on the opposite wall holds dozens upon dozens of Yap's shoes.

Talk about color-coding. Believe it or not, every single piece of plastic hanger is red.

"The system saves me time and keeps my maid's sanity," he says with a wink. "Actually, this room isn't enough to store all my stuff. Some of my outfits are in my parents' house and a halfway house I used to share with my siblings. I don't have a list of all my clothes, but I know where to look for them, every single item."

Since Yap lives alone—or so he claims—he had one of the unit's guest rooms converted into an office-cum-chill-out room with wall-to-wall "couture" carpeting that extends to an elevated platform. Again, the carpet is a kaleidoscope of wavering square patterns in black, white, apple-green and turquoise. The color scheme is echoed on the striped walls.

A movable working table doubles as a buffet table for instant parties the master of the house is given to hosting for his friends. A series of white geometric shelves features photographs of Yap and his friends, as well as travel mementos. A smaller glass showcase in the living room also holds curio pieces from all over the world.

Smart buys

Aside from being organized, Yap is also a wise buyer. When he wasn't leafing through interior design magazines with Prieto-Valdes for ideas, he and the Almarios scoured home stores in Megamall, Glorietta and Rockwell in search of interesting but reasonably priced finds. In fact, he brags, he beat Elle Décor by several months when the glossy declared that striped walls were in.

"I got some of the furniture pieces from Kish and Dimensione," he says. "Most of the picture frames are from Area, while the organizers are from Anonymous. Several chairs were either custom-built or altered to my specifications."

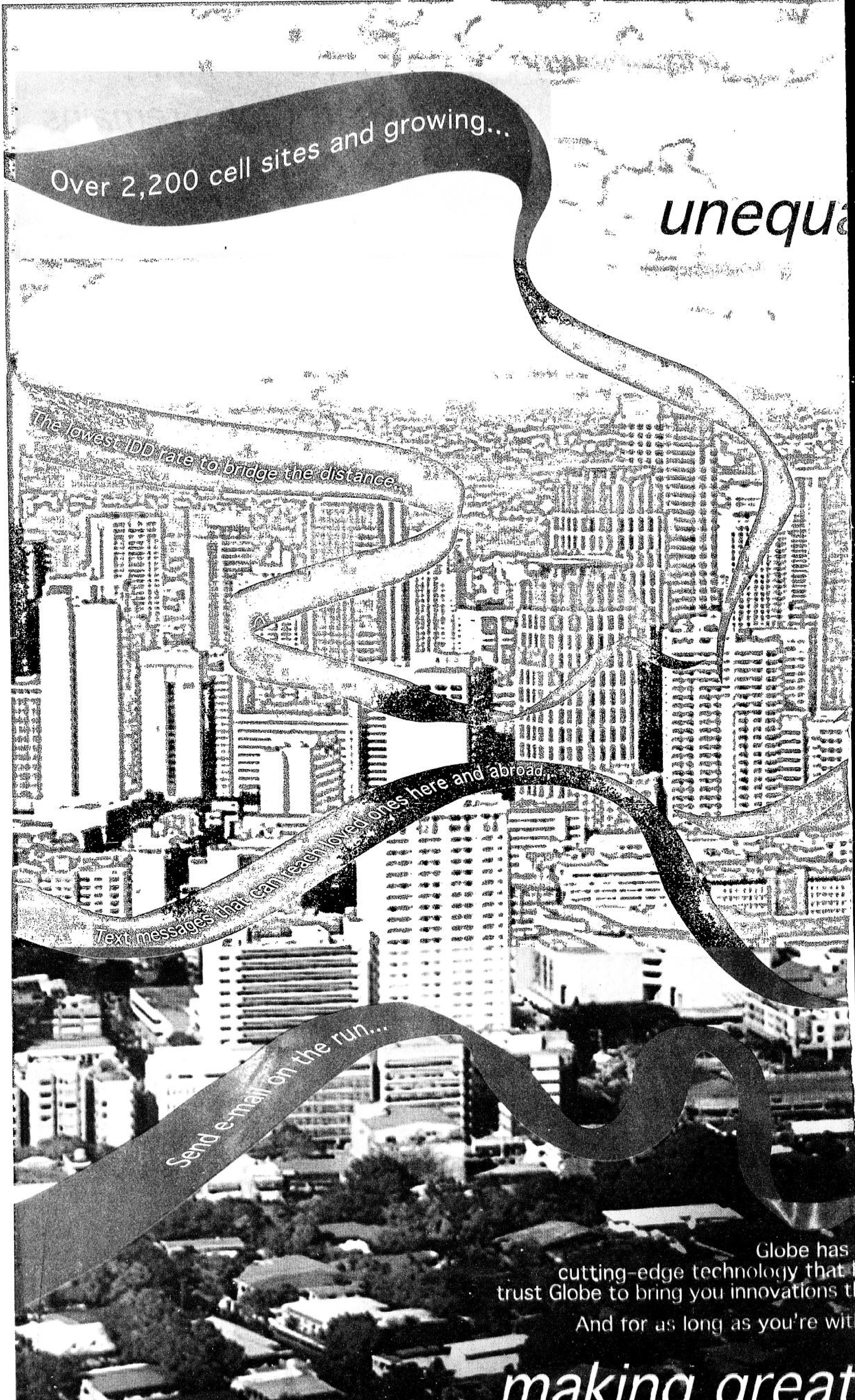
All in all, a one-of-a-kind place for Manila's one-of-a-kind eventologist.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

STOLEN SHOT. Tim Yap as himself

THE DINING-ROOM-CUM-KITCHEN exudes cool turquoise.

No matter where, no matter when,
no matter what, Globe remains...

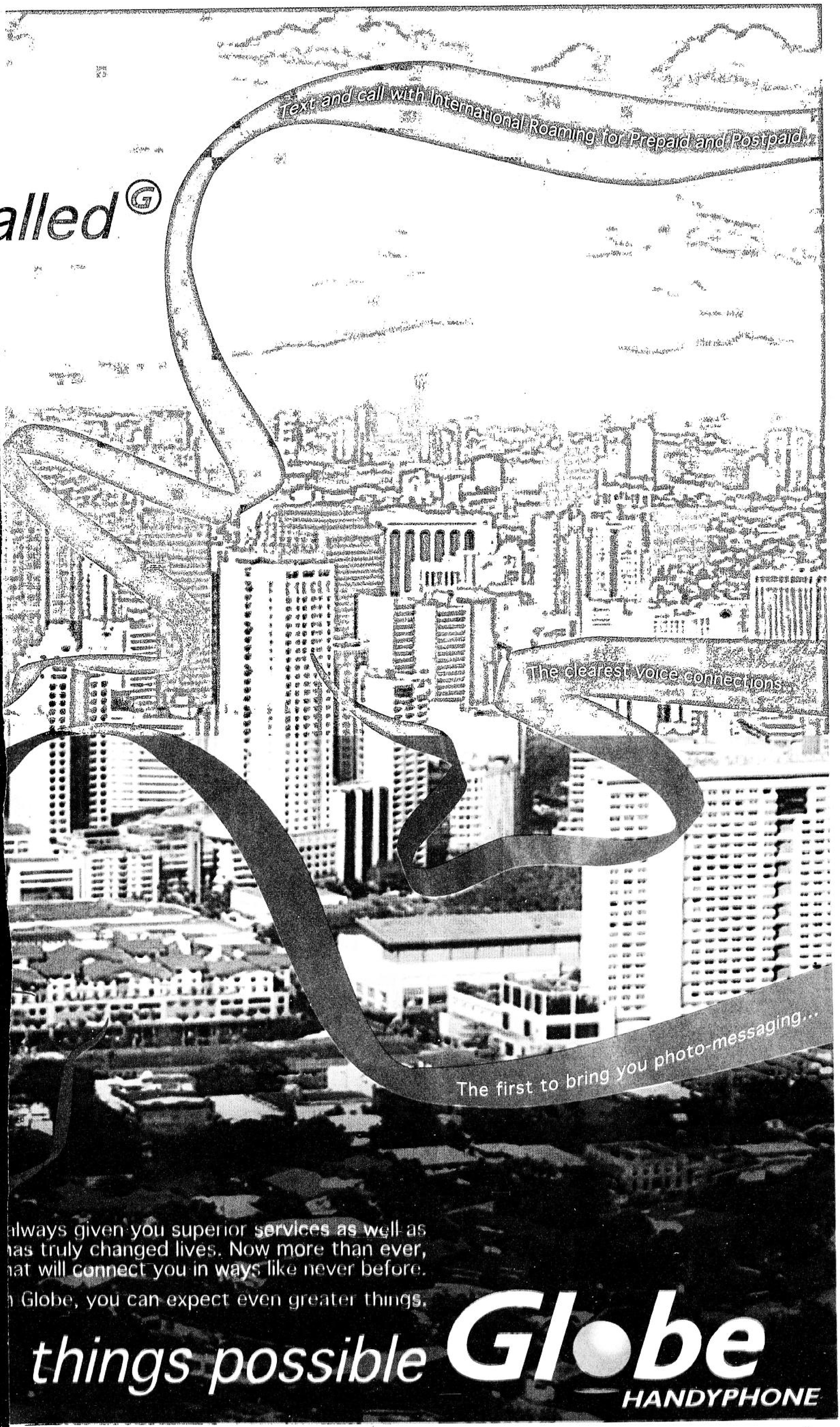

Over 2,200 cell sites and growing...
The lowest IDD rate to bridge the distance...
Text messages that can reach loved ones here and abroad...
Send e-mail on the run...

unequa

Globe has
cutting-edge technology that
trust Globe to bring you innovations t

And for as long as you're wit

making great


alled
Text and call with International Roaming for Prepaid and Postpaid.
The clearest voice connections.
The first to bring you photo-messaging...

always given you superior services as well as
has truly changed lives. Now more than ever,
hat will connect you in ways like never before.

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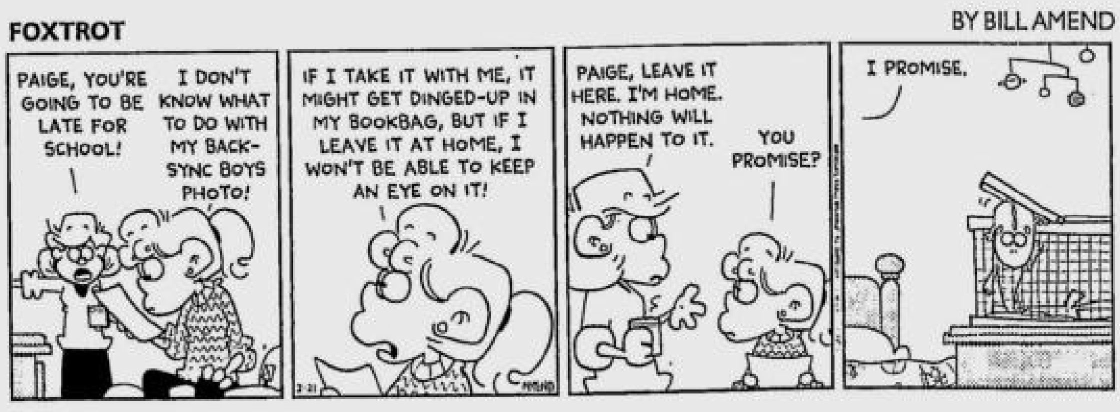
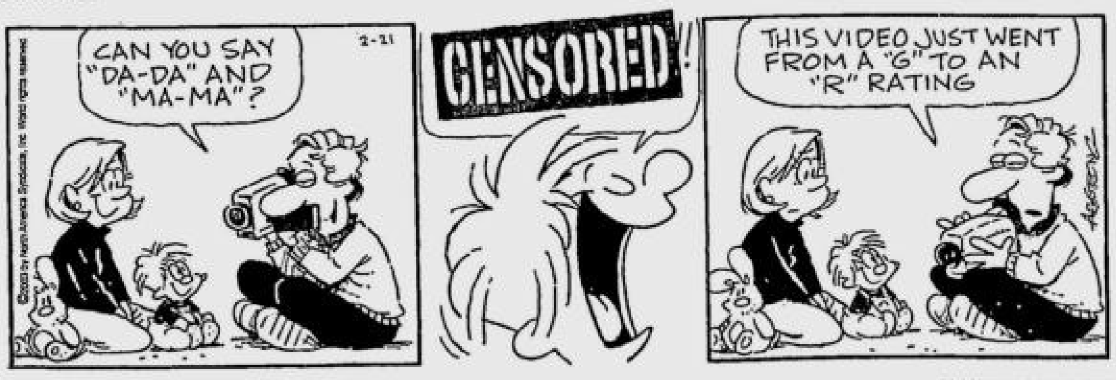
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


PAIGE, YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE FOR SCHOOL!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH MY BACK-SYNC BOYS PHOTO!
IF I TAKE IT WITH ME, IT MIGHT GET DINGED-UP IN MY BOOKBAG, BUT IF I LEAVE IT AT HOME, I WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP AN EYE ON IT!
PAIGE, LEAVE IT HERE. I'M HOME. NOTHING WILL HAPPEN TO IT.
YOU PROMISE?
I PROMISE.

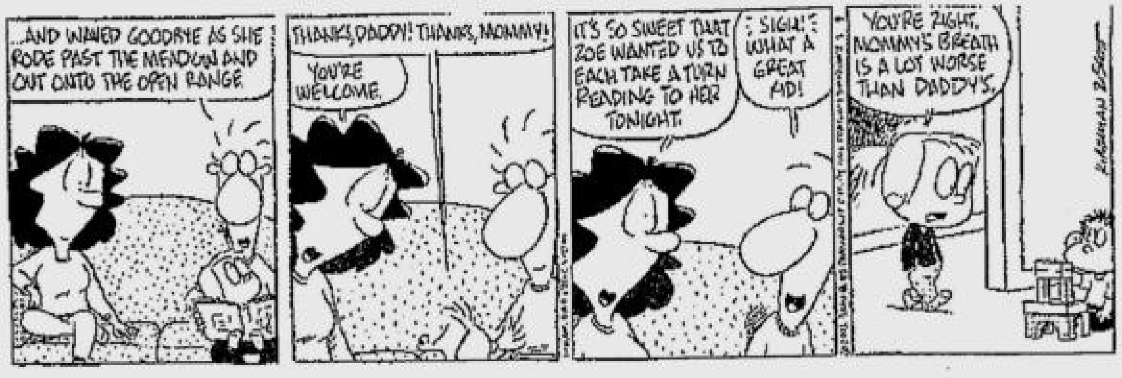
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


CAN YOU SAY "DA-DA" AND "MA-MA"?
2-21
CENSORED!
THIS VIDEO JUST WENT FROM A "G" TO AN "R" RATING

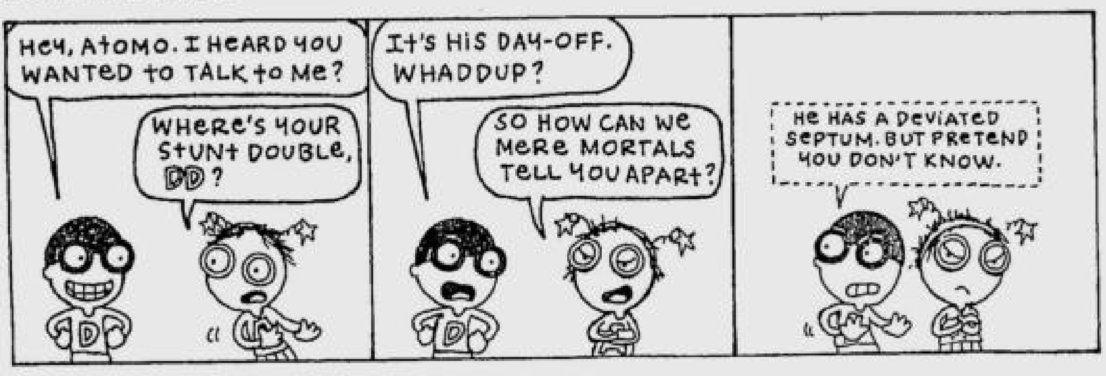
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


...AND WAVED GOODBYE AS SHE RODE PAST THE MEADOW AND OUT ONTO THE OPEN RANGE.
THANKS, DADDY! THANKS, MOMMY!
YOU'RE WELCOME.
IT'S SO SWEET THAT ZOE WANTED US TO EACH TAKE A TURN READING TO HER TONIGHT.
SIGH! WHAT A GREAT KID!
YOU'RE RIGHT. MOMMY'S BREATH IS A LOT WORSE THAN DADDY'S.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BYLYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, Atomo. I HeARD you WANTeD to TALK to Me?
Where's your STUNT DOUBLE, DD?
It's His DAY-OFF. WHADDUP?
SO HOW CAN We MeRe MORTALS TeLL YOU APARt?
He HAS A DeviATeD SePTUM. BUT PReTeND YOU DON'T KNOW.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are caring, unselfish and idealistic. You often embrace a cause in life to make the world a better place. You understand the true meaning of the word "service." You believe in the greatest good for the greatest number. Your sense of duty is strong. The year ahead focuses on your closest relationships.

Birthdate of: Drew Barrymore, actress; George Washington, first US president; Steve Irwin, TV herpetologist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You might draw unusually intense or powerful people to you now. This could trigger feelings of envy or jealousy within you. Remember that contentment is your most treasured jewel.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Conflicts with others are emotional. Keep in mind that only the people you care about really get under your skin.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Your focus today turns to home crafts, personal hygiene and reorganizing much of your personal life. You want everything to run smoothly and efficiently now.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Don't be surprised if your nurturing instincts are aroused today. You'll enjoy taking care of others, especially children and young people. You feel quite protective.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You definitely need some private time to retire by yourself somewhere. Seek escape from the demands of the outside world. Slip away and have a pleasant, quiet cup of coffee all by yourself.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Superficial conversations do not interest you today. You want to communicate to others at a gut level. You want the truth and are prepared to give it as well.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You feel unusually attached to your possessions today. You don't want to part with them or lend them. That's OK. Nobody's going to take anything from you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Today you feel a strong need to belong and relate to others. Because of this, you'll find it easy to be emotionally giving to everyone. Unexpected flirtations might surprise you.

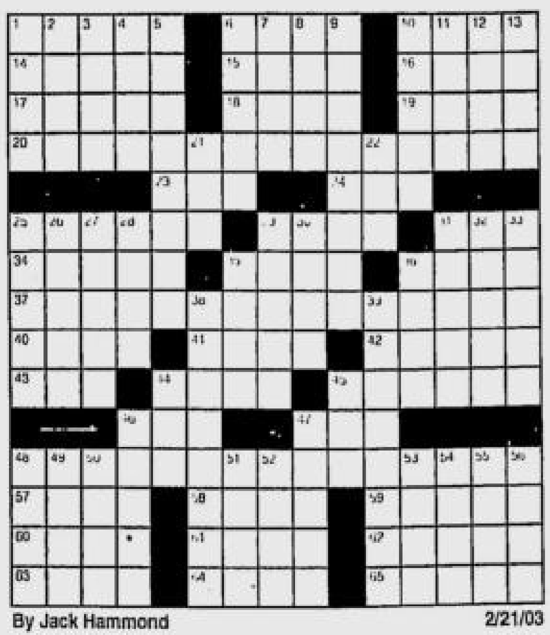
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You need a little time to be alone today. Memories from your youth bubble to the surface of your mind now. You need time to contemplate these recollections.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You will take advantage of any opportunity to help or support a friend today. In part, this is because you suddenly realize how much you need your friends. Good: Friendships must be mutually beneficial.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Some aspect of your life might become slightly public today. It could even be a public argument with a loved one. Keep this in mind before you have any knee-jerk reactions.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Study, travel or even mental journeys will please you today. You want to expand your mind and your experience of the world in any way possible.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Jack Hammond
Savannah, GA

2/21/03

ACROSS
1 Forest clearing
6 Way to Rome
10 How soon?
14 Copland or Burr
15 "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" writer Angelou
16 Abhor
17 Helsinki populace
18 Parroted
19 Skin-cream ingredient
20 Culinary gem?
23 Wonder
24 Capp and Gore
25 Get there
29 Merit
31 Fluffy scarf
34 "The Power of Positive Thinking" author
35 Tex-Mex choice
36 Arias, often
37 Not-so-tough golf clubs?
40 French friends
41 Scraped (by)
42 Stand in a studio
43 Leary's acid
44 Sere
45 Author of "Nausea"
46 Edge
47 Vent
48 Dad-gum bug?
57 Tilt
58 Pour profusely
59 Muse of poetry
60 Singer Redding
61 __ Stanley Gardner
62 __ Monica
63 Digestive fluid
64 Bribes
65 Twill weave

DOWN
1 Barbed spear
2 Den
3 River of Florence
4 Bell sound
5 Simon Legree, e.g.
6 Likeness
7 Light knocks
8 Looked over
9 Car cooler
10 Thuds
11 Circle of light
12 George Orwell's alma mater
13 Require
21 Lamb's mom
22 Public house pint
25 Dismay: var.
26 Paper units
27 Quick
28 Islands in the Seine
29 Spoke angrily
30 Passed with flying colors
31 Push upward
32 Like a big brother
33 Bridal path
35 Polynesian amulet
36 Fly high
38 Wood-eating pests
39 Superlatively fatigued
44 Intention
45 Military address
46 Hose off
47 Top points
48 Daub
49 Himalayan legend
50 Hoosegow
51 Notorious fiddler
52 Kennel sound
53 Crop of a bird
54 "Citizen __"
55 Diminutive ending
56 Warty critter

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

F	E	E	S	■	B	E	A	R	■	O	G	L	E	D
R	E	N	T	■	U	L	N	A	■	S	U	A	V	E
A	R	I	A	■	R	A	T	S	■	A	R	D	E	N
M	I	S	T	E	R	N	I	C	E	G	U	Y	■	■
E	L	L	E	N	■	■	■	A	Y	E	■	L	A	P
D	Y	E	■	C	A	N	D	L	E	■	P	I	P	E
■	■	■	H	O	M	E	O	■	■	P	O	K	E	R
■	G	O	O	D	Y	T	W	O	S	H	O	E	S	■
M	O	V	I	E	■	■	S	A	P	O	R	■	■	■
A	B	E	L	■	P	R	E	F	A	B	■	G	A	B
S	I	R	■	T	E	A	■	■	■	I	T	A	L	Y
■	■	S	T	R	A	I	G	H	T	A	R	R	O	W
A	D	I	E	U	■	S	O	A	R	■	A	G	H	A
D	O	Z	E	S	■	I	N	T	O	■	C	L	A	Y
S	C	E	N	T	■	N	E	E	D	■	T	E	S	S

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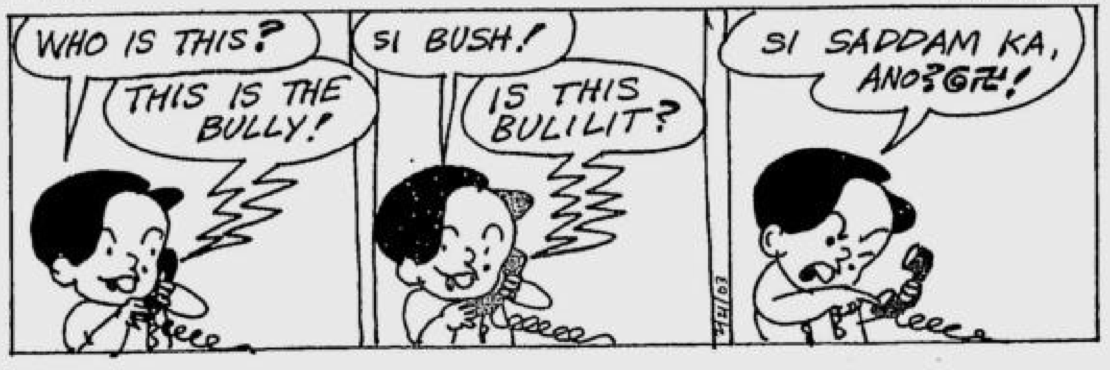
2/20/03

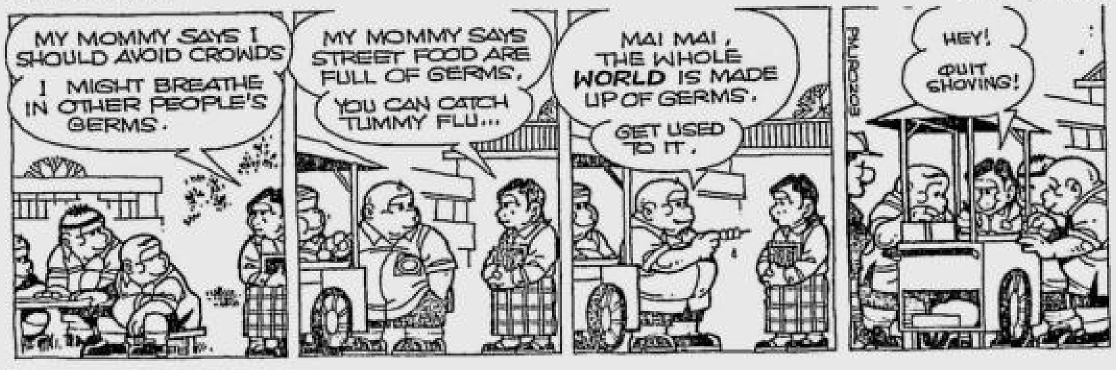
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


WHO IS THIS?
THIS IS THE BULLY!
SI BUSH!
IS THIS BULILIT?
SI SADDAM KA, ANO?@#!

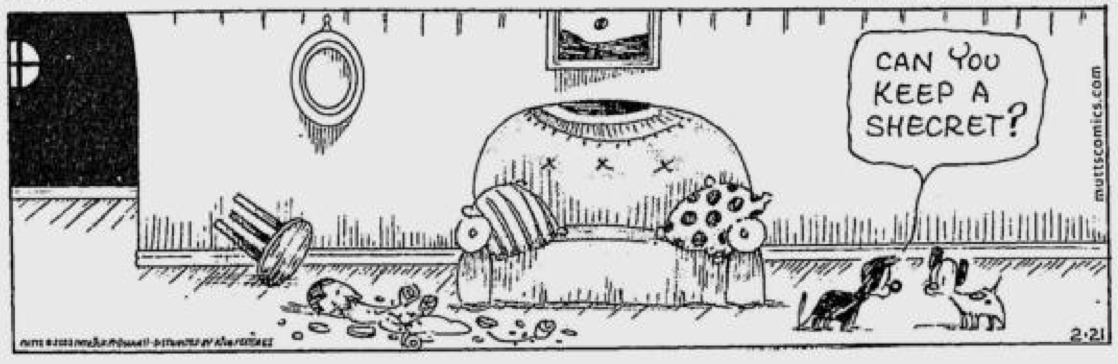
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


MY MOMMY SAYS I SHOULD AVOID CROWDS.
I MIGHT BREATHE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S GERMS.
MY MOMMY SAYS STREET FOOD ARE FULL OF GERMS.
YOU CAN CATCH TUMMY FLU...
MAI MAI, THE WHOLE WORLD IS MADE UP OF GERMS.
GET USED TO IT.
HEY!
QUIT SHOVING!

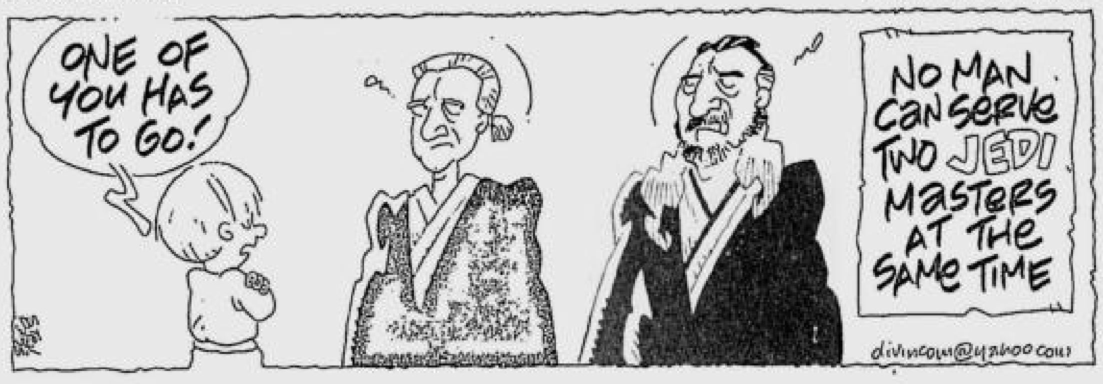
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


CAN YOU KEEP A SHECRET?
muttscomics.com
2-21

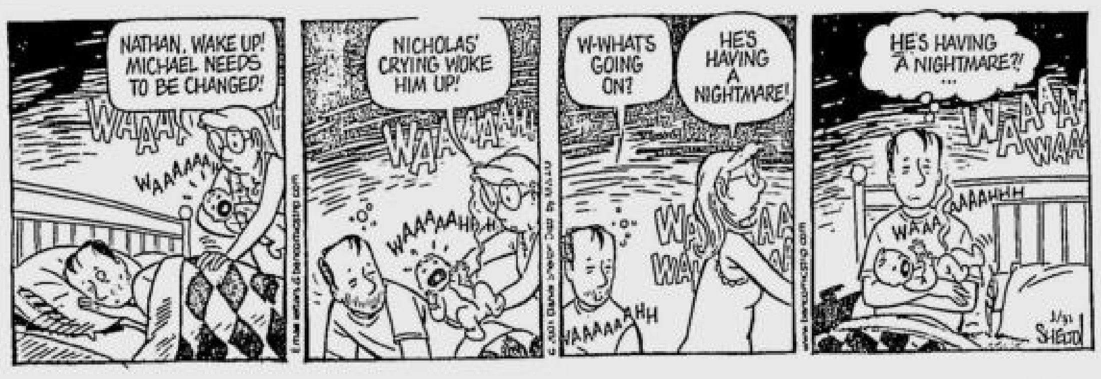
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ONE OF YOU HAS TO GO!
NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO JEDI MASTERS AT THE SAME TIME
divincom@yahoo.com

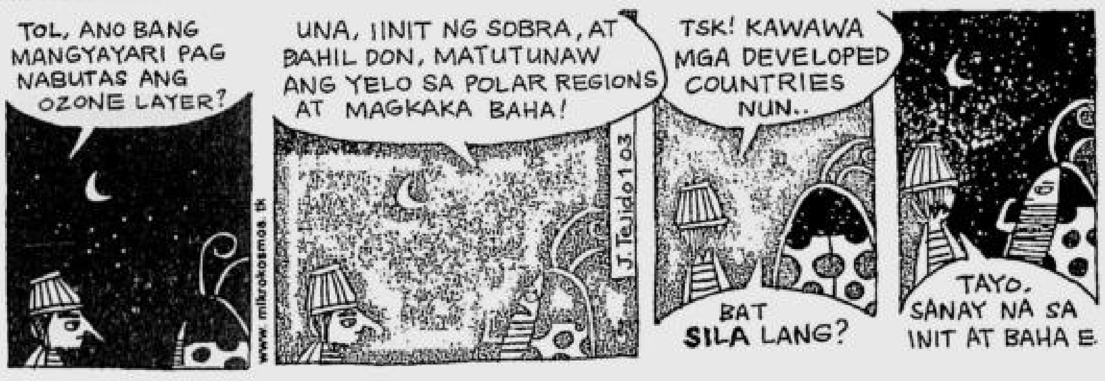
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


NATHAN, WAKE UP! MICHAEL NEEDS TO BE CHANGED!
WAAAH
NICHOLAS' CRYING WOKE HIM UP!
WAAAAHHH
W-WHAT'S GOING ON?
HE'S HAVING A NIGHTMARE!
HE'S HAVING A NIGHTMARE?! ...
WAAAH

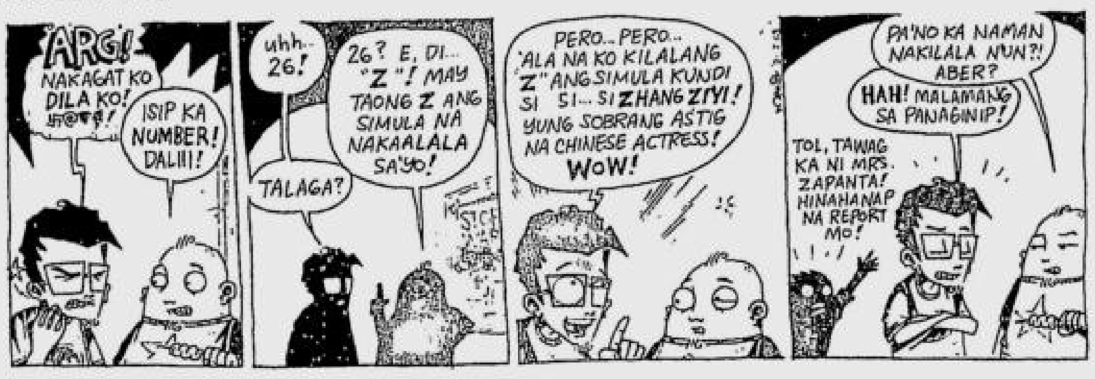
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


TOL, ANO BANG MANGYAYARI PAG NABUTAS ANG OZONE LAYER?
UNA, IINIT NG SOBRA, AT BAHIL DON, MATUTUNAW ANG YELO SA POLAR REGIONS AT MAGKAKA BAHA!
TSK! KAWAWA MGA DEVELOPED COUNTRIES NUN..
BAT SILA LANG?
TAYO. SANAY NA SA INIT AT BAHA E.
www.mikrokosmos.tk
J. Tejido 1 03

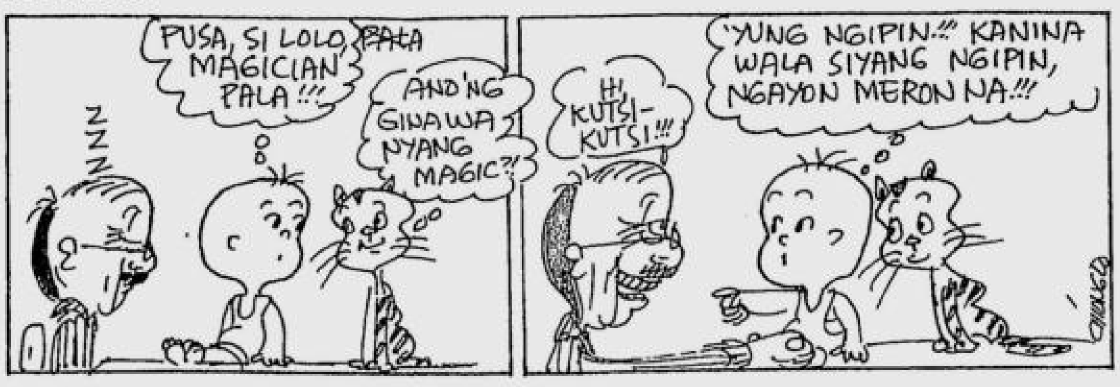
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


ARG! NAKAGAT KO DILA KO! #@*&!
ISIP KA NUMBER! DALI!!
uhh.. 26!
TALAGA?
26? E, DI... "Z"! MAY TAONG Z ANG SIMULA NA NAKAALALA SA'YO!
PERO.. PERO.. 'ALA NA KO KILALANG "Z" ANG SIMULA KUNDI SI SI... SI ZHANG ZIYI! YUNG SOBRANG ASTIG NA CHINESE ACTRESS! WOW!
PA'NO KA NAMAN NAKILALA NUN?! ABER?
HAH! MALAMANG SA PANAGINIP!
TOL, TAWAG KA NI MRS. ZAPANTA! HINAHANAP NA REPORT MO!

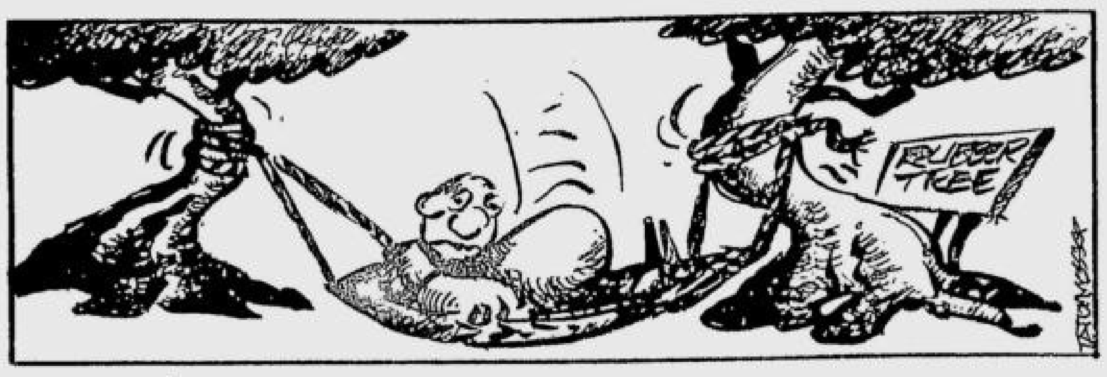
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PUSA, SI LOLO, ~~PALA~~ MAGICIAN PALA!!!
ZZZ
ANO'NG GINAWA NYANG MAGIC?!
HI, KUTSI-KUTSI!!!
'YUNG NGIPIN!!' KANINA WALA SIYANG NGIPIN, NGAYON MERON NA!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


RUBBER TREE

PLDT art exhibit ongoing

GOINGS ON

ALL 64 entries in the 2003-04 PLDT-DPC Telephone Directory Cover 17th Visual Art Competition will be on exhibit until Feb. 28 at the Ayala Museum, Makati Stock Exchange Bldg., Ayala Avenue, Makati City. The grand prize winner, Allan Jay Balisi of Far Eastern University, won P60,000 and a trophy designed and executed by National Artist Napoleon Abueva.

SEMINAR. LEO Angart will again hold a seminar-workshop on Vision: The Mind Side on Feb. 22 and 23, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at 61 Amorsolo St., San Lorenzo Village, Makati. Call 894-3618 or 813-3570.

PROMO. When you buy the New Close Up Lemon Mint worth P75 at Big R Supercenter, you'll be entitled to play the Blade Top Game wherein you will win great prizes. Also, get a free Close Up Ballpen for every purchase of the New Close Up Lemon Mint in all Big R Supercenter branches.

MUSICAL. The Ayala Malls will treat kids to the Powerpuff Girls' Saving the World before Bedtime Musical on Feb. 21 at 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.; Feb. 27 and 23, 11 a.m., 3 p.m., 6 p.m. This musical then moves to Ayala Center Cebu on Feb. 28 at 4 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.; March 1, 11 am, 3 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; and March 2, 11:30 a.m., 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

MUSICAL. The Archdiocese of Manila presents the musical play, "Mickey and the Angel: A Celebration of Life," at the Araneta Coliseum on Feb. 26. Bishop Socrates B. Villegas, with the blessing of Jaime Cardinal Sin, has recommended that schools of the archdiocese send delegations of students to watch the play, a touching story of Mickey, an unborn child, and her conversations with her guardian angel. Call 0918-9335404 or 0917-8967563.

PROMO. Until Feb. 28, every purchase of a Palm Tungsten T or a Palm m515 handheld entitles a customer to a free Creative Digital MP3 Player. From its original price of P28,000, the Tungsten T is now only P21,900 during promo period. Promo is valid only for individual owners and end-users and not for corporate and special project purchases of Palm handhelds at discounted prices.

OPENING. Motor City is opening its Davao City branch on March 1, across SM Davao, Quimpo Boulevard, Davao City. It will feature food, games and amusement centers, car accessories, car wash and other related businesses. Call Jojo Alave or Christine Manzano at (082)222-43.

FUN ACTIVITY. On April Fool's Day, MTV and Mentos the Freshmaker will help someone pull off a surprise. The winner will be given P20,000 to carry out the plan. The MTV camera crew will capture all the fun. The freshest and most innovative idea wins. Entries can be sent to MTV Asia Hitlist-April Fool's Day. P.O. Box 1696 Makati Central Post Office, Makati City. Entries should include the name, age, address and contact numbers of the participants plus two empty 37g roll wrappers of Mentos. There will also be consolation prizes to be given away. Check out www.mtvasia.com. Deadline for submission of entries is on March 7.

SEMINAR. Strategic marketing and communications firm TeamAsia will hold two half-day seminars dubbed "High Visibility: Building Strong Personal Brands" on March 6 and 7 at the RCBC Plaza. The seminars will provide extensive and valuable insights on what is required to begin the process of celebrity brand building to help individuals develop a successful professional career. Seminar speaker is Michael Alan Hamlin. Call 876-5200 or e-mail mupaco@teamasia.com.

EXHIBIT. The Japan Foundation Manila Office (JFMO) in cooperation with the Shangri-La Plaza Corporation presents "The World of Kokeshi Dolls" exhibit. The dolls can be viewed daily on March 6-26 at the Grand Atrium, Level 2 of Shangri-La Edsa Mall, Shaw Blvd. corner Edsa, Mandaluyong City. Call JFMO at 811-6155 to 58.

WORKSHOP. A jewelry-making workshop by Patricia Andrada will be held on March 5-26, every Wednesday, 2-5 p.m. at Food and Art Galerie, 12/F GT International Tower, Ayala Avenue cor. H.V. dela Costa, Makati. The workshop will discuss the making of earrings, bracelets and necklaces. Call Ayala Museum at 810-8407.

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT. "Moments of Being" photography exhibit will be opened by Jaime Zobel de Ayala on March 12 at 6 p.m. at the Glorietta Artspace. The exhibit will run until March 18.

PROGRAM. The ASEAN Ladies Circle recently launched the "ALC Smiling Bossing" project on waste management program and mascot at the Makati Park and Garden with the city government of Makati led by Mayor Jejomar Binay. Call 816-4245 , telefax 812-7566 and [0916] 569-5543.

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Sweet deal for phone subscribers

MAKE everyday doubly sweeter with a chocolate treat from Globe Prepaid and Hershey's Kisses.

A purchase of any Globe Prepaid SIM pack until March 31 entitles the buyer to a free special edition of Globe Hershey's Kisses Collection, consisting of a specially-designed can loaded with Hershey's Kisses and valued at P125.

To claim this sweet Globe Hershey's Kisses treat, which comes in three attractive tin can designs, make an initial chargeable call on this newly-purchased Globe Prepaid SIM within the specified promo period. Upon doing so, he will receive a text message containing promo information from Globe 2977 the next day. Present the text message at any Mercury Drugstore or Shell Select outlet nationwide to claim the free Globe Hershey's Kisses chocolate treat.

The even sweeter deal is that all new Globe Prepaid subscribers who made their first call within the promo period can win a trip for two to Hershey's Chocolate World in Pennsylvania, USA. To join, text in REG<space> name <space> and send to 2994, and you will be assigned one electronic entry number. Each Globe Prepaid SIM will receive only one raffle entry number. The electronic raffle will be held in April.

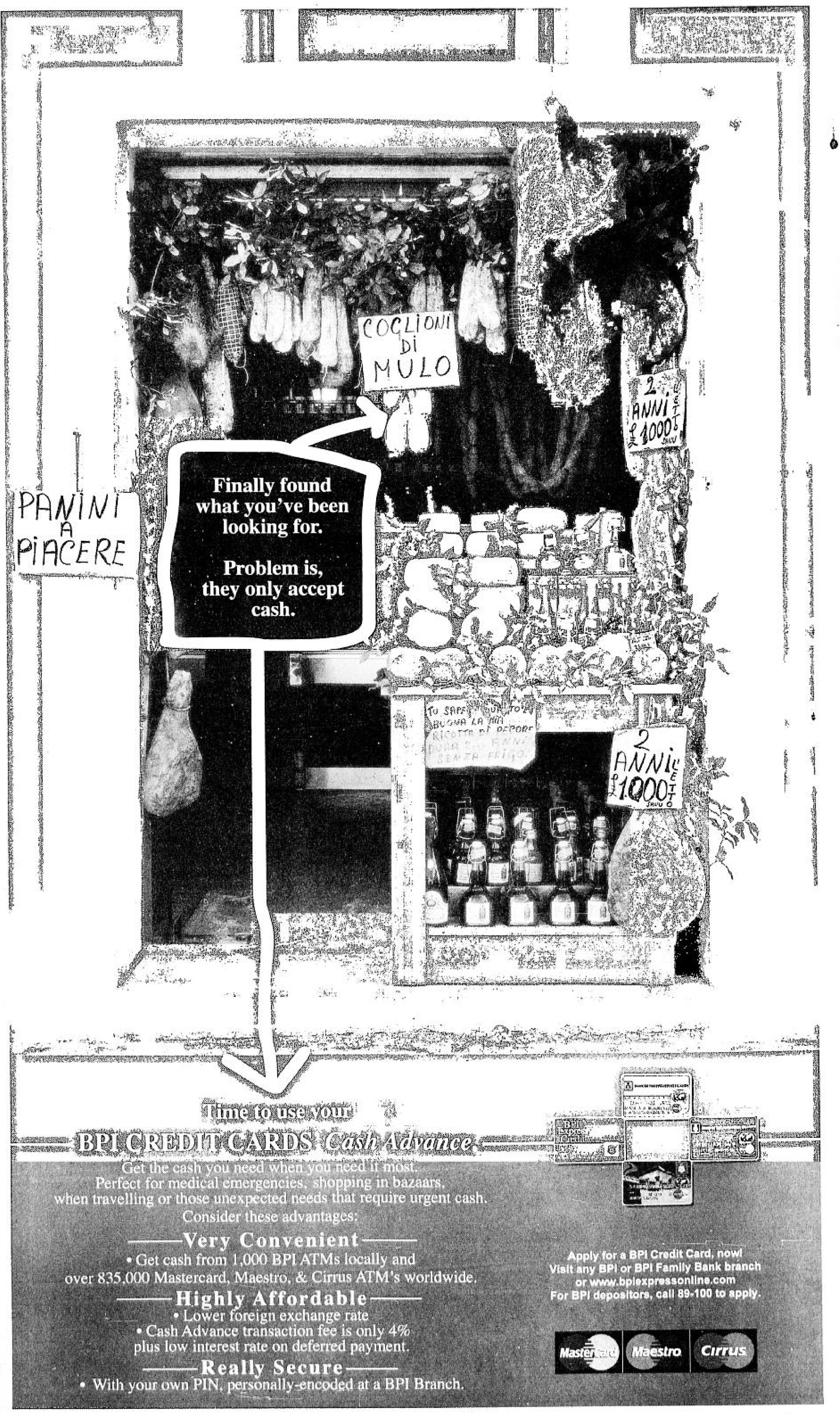
Garden show ends Sunday

IF you are a plant enthusiast or even just a weekend backyard gardener, you will surely enjoy the show of the Ayala Alabang Village Garden Club, which is ongoing until Sunday at the Narra Park, Narra St., Ayala Alabang Village.

Bien Cabral, president of the garden club, said members set up seven landscape displays on "Water Gardens," which competed for the Best Booth for 2003 award.

Visitors can learn how plants are arranged and cared for. They will also be able to buy plants at reasonable prices from different plant concessionaires from all over Luzon. At 10 a.m. tomorrow, Joyce Kato of the Ikenobo-Ikebana International will demonstrate various ikebana flower arrangements, and at 3 p.m., foreign language professor and writer, Chat Alejandro, will talk on feng shui and lucky plants in the Year of the Goat.

On Sunday, at 10 a.m., Philippine Horticulture Society president PJ Nepomuceno will show how to culture and propagate bromeliads, as well as basic fern culture, and at 2:30 p.m. composting will be discussed.


COGLIONI DI MULO
2 ANNI £1000
PANINI A PIACERE
2 ANNI £1000
Finally found what you've been looking for.
Problem is, they only accept cash.

Time to use your
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Get the cash you need when you need it most.
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when travelling or those unexpected needs that require urgent cash.
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Double treat for audiences of 'Juan Luna' opera

IMELDA Cojuangco, chair of the Opera Guild Foundation of the Philippines, recently announced that the Manila audience will get a double treat at the premiere performance of the opera "Juan Luna (Spoliarium)." The original Luna painting "La Vie Parisienne (Parisian Life)" will be exhibited at the Cultural Center of the Philippines tonight.

Written by Fides Cuyugan Asensio and set to music by Ryan Cayabyab, the opera goes into the tragic events that led to the "crime of passion" when painter Luna shot and killed his wife and mother-in-law.

The controversial painting of "Parisian Life" was offered at a Christie's auction in Hong Kong last October, provoking questions of whether its sale was authorized by the National Museum and whether it should have been allowed to leave the country. The GSIS defeated other bidders at the auction and successfully brought the painting back to the Philippines. It cost P46 million and is the most expensive painting ever bought by the government.

The painting shows a woman seated at a café. There are three men at a nearby table—Jose Rizal, T. H. Pardo de Tavera and Luna himself, who are among the characters of the opera being presented.

STC 2003 ALUMNAE HOMECOMING

FRONT row, from left: Lala Gonzales, Connie Cruz, Agnes Calleja, Tes Jaramillo, Ditas Martelino, Cecile Bautista, Marjorie Batoon, Yam de la Cruz, Delby Bragais, Wena de Leon, Glenda Alog, Divina Panaguition, Aleli Nuguid, Gertrude Reinoso, Luli Victor, Becky Chan, Nina Encarnacion, Bessie Rivera; second row, Diana Prado, Peewee Lapid; third row, Lani Somera and Eileen Araneta

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Theresians invade the catwalk

MEET the following women: Gertrude, a doctor; Lani, a lawyer; Eileen, a corporate executive; Glenda, an insurance consultant; Marjorie, an accountant; Becky, a businesswoman. What do they and 15 other women have in common?

Besides being members of St. Theresa's College Quezon City High School Batch '78, they have recently modeled the creations of batchmate Delby Panaguiton-Bragais in a 20-minute fashion show. The segment featured summer wear, cocktail outfits, corporate attire and evening gowns.

Hairbytes did the Theresians' hair and makeup and Rio provided their fashion accessories.

New TV technology makes waves

SINCE it was introduced globally by Philips Consumer Electronics (PCE), Pixel Plus has been making waves around the world. And just recently, Europe's No. 1 consumer electronics company hosted a luncheon for a select group of high-profile personalities to demonstrate how truly revolutionary the new Philips Pixel Plus TV is.

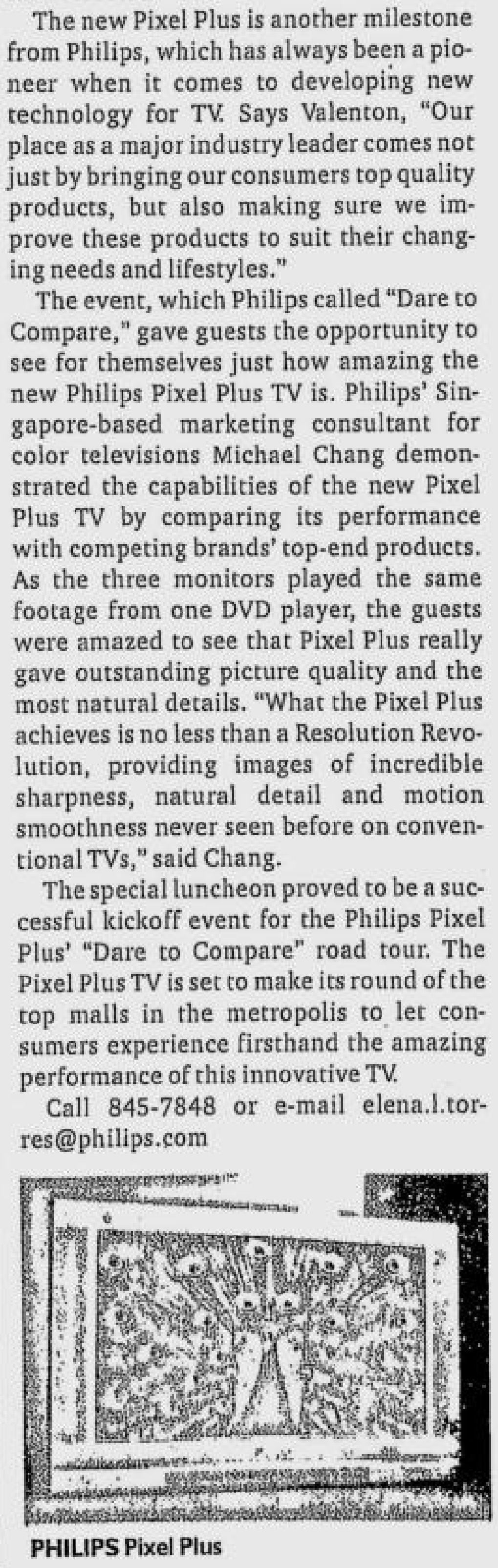
The affair, held at Greenbelt 2's Solid Cafe Moderne, drew notable names in media, business and entertainment. Joining PGE general manager Angelo Valenton were Mario Katigbak of Bvlgari, Gigi Mabanta of Louis Vuitton, Ernie Lopez of ABS-CBN Publishing, Millie Dizon of SM, Raul Manzano of IPAC, Lito Cruz of E! Entertainment Philippines, Butch Canoy of RMN, society arbiter Maurice Arcache, top photographer Alex Van Hagen, Philips Cu-Unjieng of Dish, Mel Meer of Bergamo, socialite Mons Tantoco, entrepreneur and writer Leah Puyat, designer Efren Ocampo, and TV hosts Julius Babao and Christine Bersola.

The new Pixel Plus is another milestone from Philips, which has always been a pioneer when it comes to developing new technology for TV. Says Valenton, "Our place as a major industry leader comes not just by bringing our consumers top quality products, but also making sure we improve these products to suit their changing needs and lifestyles."

The event, which Philips called "Dare to Compare," gave guests the opportunity to see for themselves just how amazing the new Philips Pixel Plus TV is. Philips' Singapore-based marketing consultant for color televisions Michael Chang demonstrated the capabilities of the new Pixel Plus TV by comparing its performance with competing brands' top-end products. As the three monitors played the same footage from one DVD player, the guests were amazed to see that Pixel Plus really gave outstanding picture quality and the most natural details. "What the Pixel Plus achieves is no less than a Resolution Revolution, providing images of incredible sharpness, natural detail and motion smoothness never seen before on conventional TVs," said Chang.

The special luncheon proved to be a successful kickoff event for the Philips Pixel Plus' "Dare to Compare" road tour. The Pixel Plus TV is set to make its round of the top malls in the metropolis to let consumers experience firsthand the amazing performance of this innovative TV.

Call 845-7848 or e-mail elena.l.torres@philips.com



PHILIPS Pixel Plus

il us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
LIFESTYLE
Home

P-29!
DUNKIN' DONUTS

TOMATO "Spitfire" has juicy fruits that weigh 200 to 250 each. It is known in the trade as "beefsteak" tomato.

Grow a 'pinakbet' urban garden

New vegetable varieties adapt readily to urban conditions, even if gardens are backyard lots, small porches or roof decks

By Tita V. Giron

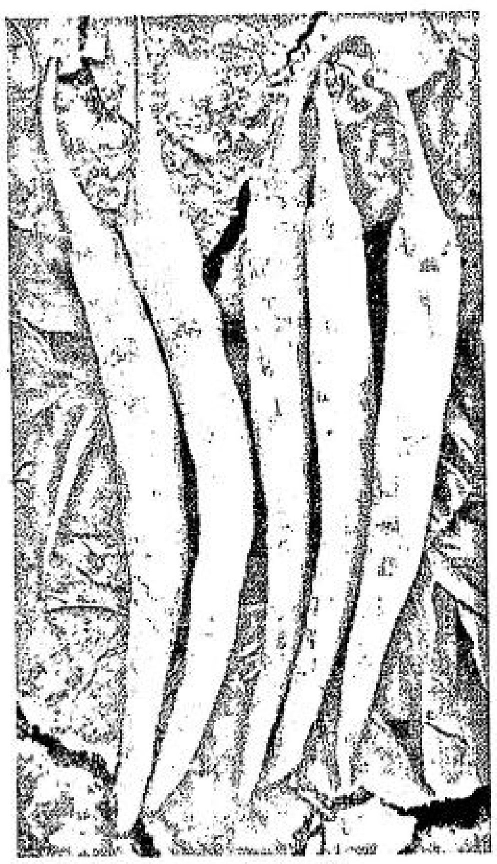
WE can hardly wait for the release of the seeds of new vegetable varieties collectively called "*pinakbet*" that are being developed by a seed company especially for lowland farms and city gardens. The varieties include eggplant, squash, tomato, *ampalaya, upo, sitao, patola* and mild pepper.

After years and months of research and experiments, the agriculturists and growers finally harvested the first fruits of their labor at the 22-ha experimental and breeding farm of Allied Botanical Corporation (ABC).

CEO Willie Co and chief hybridist Dr. Bliss Alday have a right to brag about the results of their breeding project. Compared to traditional varieties, the new vegetables are more productive, hardier and disease-resistant. What is more, they adapt readily to urban conditions, even if the gardens are downsized backyard lots, small porches or roof decks.

If only for the taste of freshly harvested vegetables in various native dishes, it was well worth traveling 200 kilometers from Manila to visit the ABC farm in Barrio Lichauco, Tayug, Pangasinan.

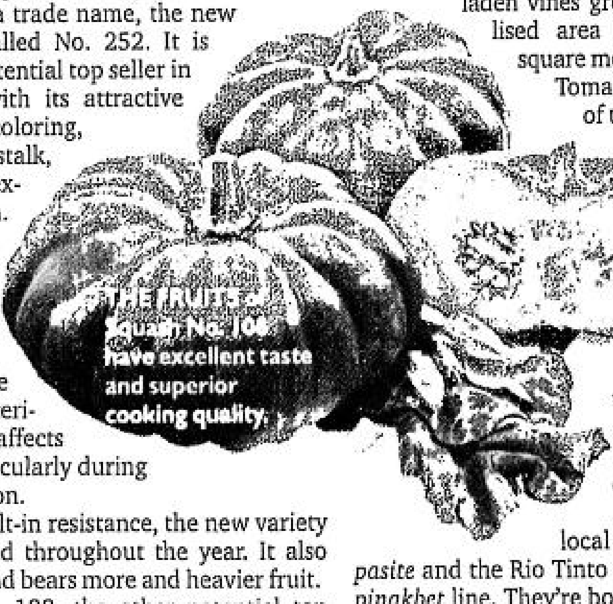
It was a rewarding experience for us and the other guests to see the fruit-laden vegetables in the field.


MILD chili peppers called *inokra*

Exciting varieties

Dr. Alday, a former agriculture professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, briefed us on the attributes of the new vegetable varieties. He was quite excited about two vegetables in particular—still nameless varieties of eggplants and squash.

For lack of a trade name, the new eggplant is called No. 252. It is doubtless a potential top seller in the market with its attractive uniform coloring, bright green stalk, and well-textured flesh. Eggplant No. 252 has also been tested for strength and resistance to the common bacterial blight that affects the plant particularly during the rainy season.


THE FRUITS of Squash No. 108 have excellent taste and superior cooking quality.

With its built-in resistance, the new variety can be planted throughout the year. It also lives longer and bears more and heavier fruit.

Squash No. 108, the other potential top seller, has been singled out for market release because studies have shown that the fruit is sweeter than other varieties. It has a superior cooking quality and excellent taste. What's more, the dark-green fruits are uniform in size and weigh about 2 to 4 kilos each, the weight preferred by consumers.

Other vegetables

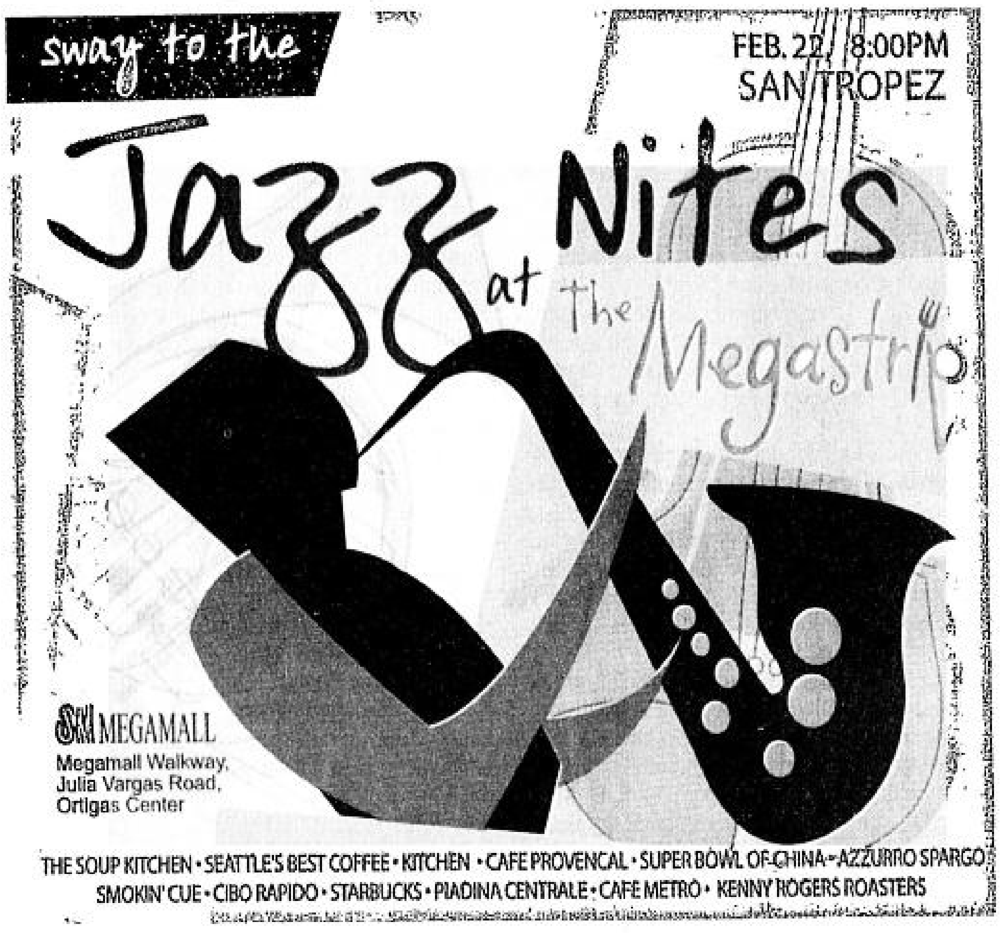
Upo "*tambuli*" is another exciting vegetable variety that thrives and bears quality fruits even in small gardens. According to the farm growers, it only needed one square meter of growing space. The farmers brought us to the *upo* growing area to show several gourds that were ready for picking. There were six heavily laden vines growing within a trellised area that measured six square meters.

Tomato "Spitfire" is one of the new varieties developed in the farm. It bears a lot of big, juicy fruits called "beefsteak" tomatoes. Well-developed fruits weigh 200 to 250 grams each.

A mild chili, which local consumers call *siling pasite* and the Rio Tinto onions complete the *pinakbet* line. They're both prolific herbs that adapt easily to urban gardens.

All the new varieties can be grown on the ground, as well as in containers. For more details, call Michael Caballes or Wen Bienes at 911-0836 and 911-2822.

UPO 'tambuli' will grow and produce lots of fruits in a tight one-square-meter area with trellis.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Kitchen waste can aid in production of kitchen staples

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaskell Nuyda

AMID the big waste-disposal problem bugging Metro Manila these days comes a simple note from Rafael D. Guerrero III, executive director of the Department of Science and Technology's Philippine Council for Aquatic and Marine Research and Development (PCAMRD) in Los Baños, Laguna.

Guerrero, through the note, shares a technology that he thinks people will find practical and easy to apply in urban houses, apartments and condominiums. Vermicomposting utilizes biodegradable wastes like vegetable trimmings and fruit peels that comprise about 40 percent or more of household kitchen waste.

Through the action of aerobic bacteria (that does not cause a bad odor) and domesticated earthworms, the waste can be converted into potting medium and/or organic fertilizer that is excellent for growing leafy vegetables (cabbage, lettuce, *pechay*, *mustasa*, even cauliflower) in pots, plastic bags or tin cans.

To confirm the effectiveness of the technology, a study was made by Guerrero and Luzviminda A. Guerrero of the Aquatic Biosystems in Bay, Laguna. They used a bottomless drum for composting.

The study was conducted to help in the implementation of the solid waste management law, and to test the efficacy of the resulting compost as fertilizer for a selected vegetable, the *alugbati*.

It also compared the *alugbati* fertilized with compost from household waste, including backyard litter and weeds, to that fertilized by inorganic products.

After 77 days of culture, the study found that the *alugbati* fertilized with kitchen-based compost had longer tendrils than the other one.

The study came up with detailed instructions on vermicomposting application, but R. D. Guerrero gives only the three main steps to assure success: 1. Segregate biodegradable from nonbiodegradable waste; 2. Put the biodegradable in a plastic or steel container with openings for aeration (for the study, a bottomless drum was used); and 3. Add the earthworms and let them do the rest.

"The earthworms feed on the decomposed material," explains Guerrero, "and produce vermicompost, which is rich in nutrients and natural growth-promoting factors."

The first two steps in vermicomposting are standard for most composts anywhere, but the addition of the earthworms (vermiculture) makes the fertilizer richer in nutrients, Guerrero says, and hastens decomposition as well.

As a side note, we'd like to mention that we'd seen the vegetable gardens at Leisure Farms in Tagaytay where the produce was fertilized similarly, using grass cuttings and leaves mixed with earthworms. The earthworms were cultivated, too. Those in Tagaytay were "housed" in cement tanks filled with soil. Earthworm action made the soil look rich enough to fertilize the vegetables.

But the farm managers wanted to ensure a real good crop each time, so a regular blending of grass cuttings and earthworm-rich soil was maintained. The results were beautiful, healthy lettuce, cabbage, arugula and other leafy greens, as well as carrots, peppers and other organically grown vegetables.

The bottomless drum was the preferred container for the kitchen waste collected from households because it made composting easier. After four weeks from the last load of compost material, the drum was tilted to pick up the compost from the bottom. This was then mixed with garden soil at a 50:50 ratio and placed in three earthen flower pots (size 10). Each pot was planted with two 30-cm. cuttings of *alugbati* and cultured for 77 days. Three other pots filled only with composted grass cuttings and garden soil at a 50:50 ratio were also planted to *alugbati* and cultured for the same period.

As mentioned earlier, a comparative study of the two sets of *alugbati* was made, and we know now which set had the healthier growth.

Other advantages of vermicomposting, Guerrero says, is that it can be done the whole year round as long as organic wastes are available. This, he adds, assures households of a chemical-free fertilizer for vegetable growing while reducing waste production through recycling.

Guerrero is not only sharing the down-home technology, he and his office staff are also willing to assist village associations and other interested groups in the application of vermicompost in urban areas. He may be contacted by e-mail: pcamrd@laguna.net, or at PCAMRD-DOST, tel. (049)536-55-79, Aquatic Biosystems, Bay, Laguna.

E-mail the author at dorisnuyda@yahoo.com

Marriage Retorno, next step to Marriage Encounter

LIVE AND LET LIVE

Tita Dulce

DEAR Tita Dulce,

I have just read your column in the Inquirer Online (www.inq7.net) about the Catholic Engaged Encounter and the Marriage Encounter Weekend. We would like to (ask you to let) your readers know about the Marriage Retorno Seminar developed by Fr. Gabriel Calvo, a Diocesan priest, who is also the founder of the Marriage Encounter.

Father Calvo developed the Marriage Retorno Encounter in response to the problems of many married couples. One problem is many couples, while having a wonderful experience during and after the Marriage Encounter Weekend, do not bring God into their relationship.

Father Calvo called the weekend "Retorno" after the highway turnaround signs in Spain, as it was a "going back" in their lives, a time for looking around and making sure they were going in the right direction.

After Father Calvo went to the United States, he developed other programs for families and singles that were also called Retornos. The weekends for married couples were renamed "Marriage Retorno" (MR). He envisioned it as the next step after Marriage Encounter.

The MR Weekend Seminar, March 21-23, will be conducted by the MR Singapore Committee composed of Fr. Johnson Fernandez, Peter and Cecilia Wong, and Stanley and Somo Tan. Venue is Las Brisas Conference Center, Ortigas Extension, Antipolo City. Participants should bring their own Bible, notebooks and ball pens.

The MR Singapore Team will be conducting whole day briefing/orientation March 19-20 (participants should pay for their own meals). Early reservation and registration are requested as slots are limited.

Couples can register on line at www.kairoscenter.com/retorno/sched.html.

Links to more information can also be found in that site, or contact Roy/Malee San Buenaventura, residence tel. 644-5081; office: 911-3101 loc. 7365; or Malee- 0918-9302060.

Thank you and God bless.

ROY AND MALEE
SAN BUENAVENTURA
Kairos M.E. Community

Thank you for the information for couples wishing to enrich their lives with more blessings. While it is wise to concentrate on today and live for the future, Marriage Retorno gives a chance to remember the past, figure out which actions were right and which ones were wrong. The MR Weekend will really be a reminder that "God moves in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform." It will also remind couples to offer each day to the Lord and to thank Him for His blessings at the end of each day.

Praying for the departed

My husband was assigned to work here in Manila and we have been residing in a quiet village since December. Our children are still in the province with my parents-in-law, but they will come here (at the end of) the schoolyear.

Since we arrived here, we (had been getting) the Philippine Daily Inquirer at home. Before, when we were in the province, my husband would read it in the office, while I took care of our children and baked cakes and cookies ordered by friends and neighbors.

Reading your column is very enlightening, which is why I decided to write to you. I'm afraid to go out by myself, being not used to city life, but I'm not bored because we have PDI and television. Now a coffee shop orders from me after tasting my samples.

My mother died last year after a second heart attack and I keep dreaming about her. On Sundays, my husband and I go to hear Mass but I'm afraid (to go to church on weekdays because I have to make two jeepney rides by myself). What do you suggest I should do, just pray the rosary daily and pray for the eternal repose of my mother's soul so that I will not dream about her anymore? I'm not worried about my children. They are in good health and in the loving care of my in-laws, their Lolo and Lola.

LOLITA

The prayer of St. Gertrude the Great to the Eternal Father is said to release 10,000 souls each time it is prayed. If you keep dreaming of your mother, concentrate on her past. Was there anything she started to do? However, if there were no problems in the past, it is just grief taking hold of your mind.

You may want to join the Prayer Warriors of the Holy Souls, an apostolate of the Monfort Foundation. I suggest you get copies of their pamphlets, "Read me or Rue It," "Let's Pray the Rosary," "How to Avoid Purgatory" and Green Scapular of the Virgin Mary." Each one costs P10. If you want them mailed, double the amount you will send.

Their address: Unit A1 Guevent Commercial Center, 52 Libertad cor. M. Cruz Sts., Mandaluyong City or P.O. Box 220 Greenhills, San Juan, with tel. 531-2157/531-0394 local 101. You can also just phone in your order since you are now in Manila. You might also want to subscribe to their quarterly newsletter "Fore and Aft."

The foundation aims to provide for the spiritual, physical and financial needs of the under-privileged so they can achieve total well-being.

St. Thomas Aquinas said, "Of all prayers, the most meritorious, the most acceptable to God are prayers for the dead, because they imply all the works of charity both corporal and spiritual."

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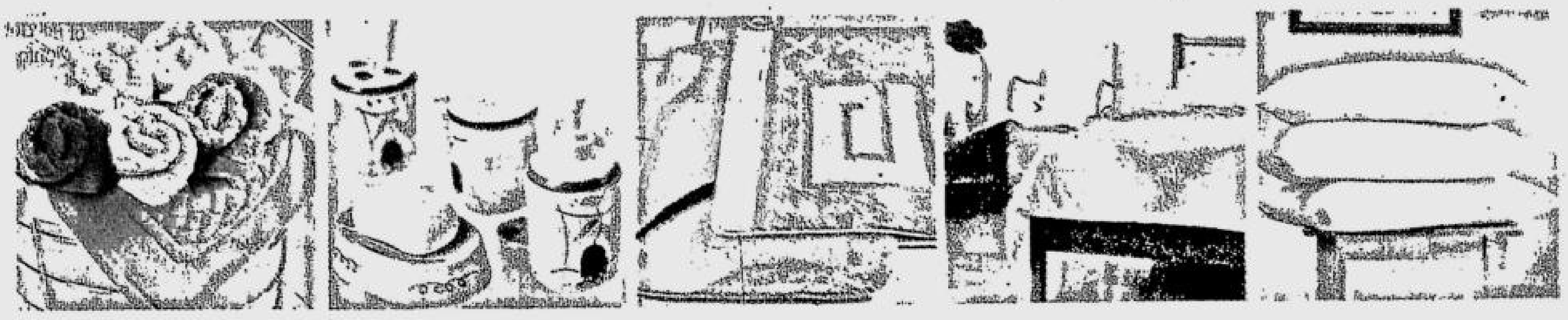

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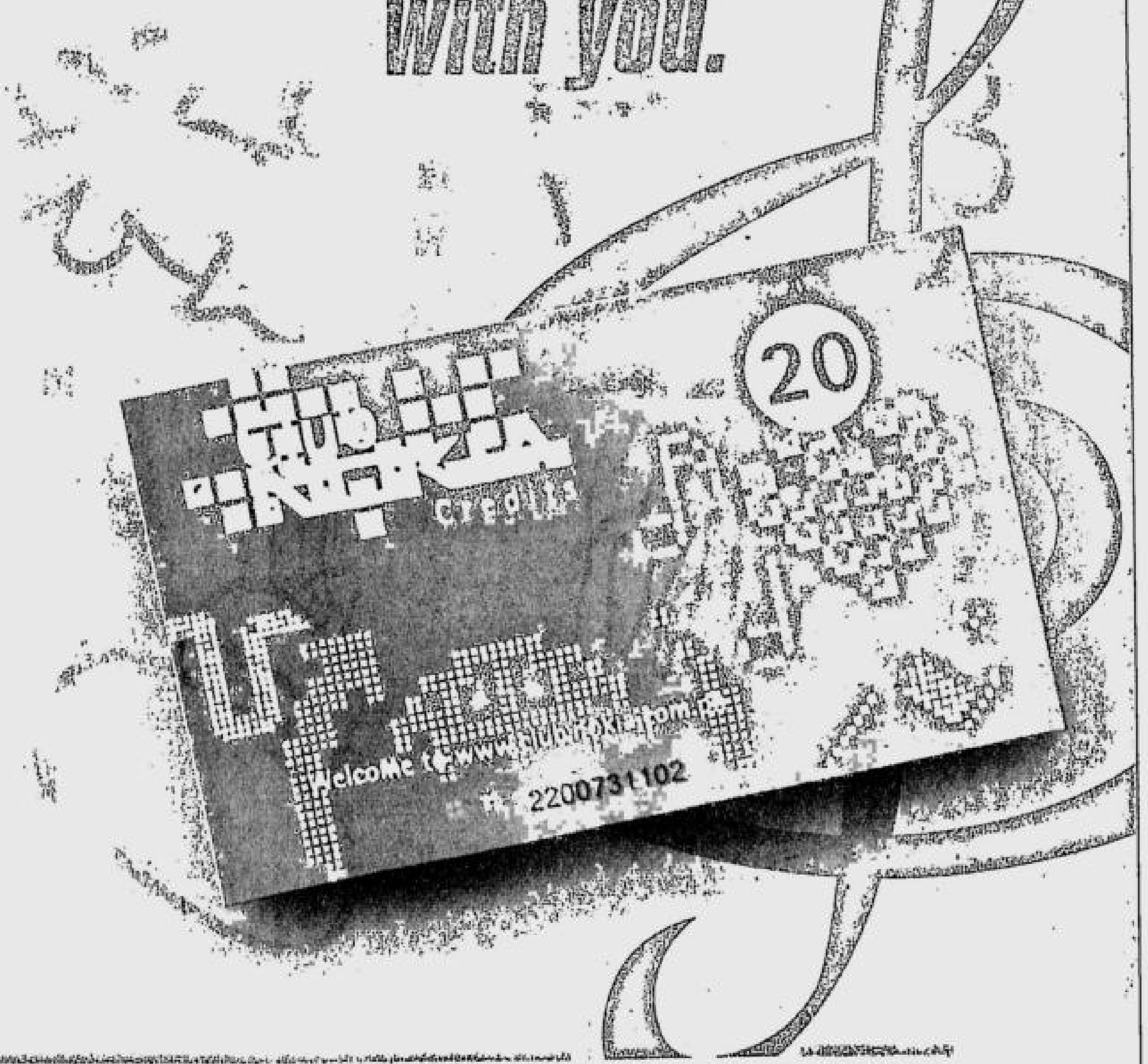

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For feedback, text us at (0919)880-33-54 or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

Trend Spotting

Light and white

Text by Cheche V. Moral
Photos by Erik Arazas

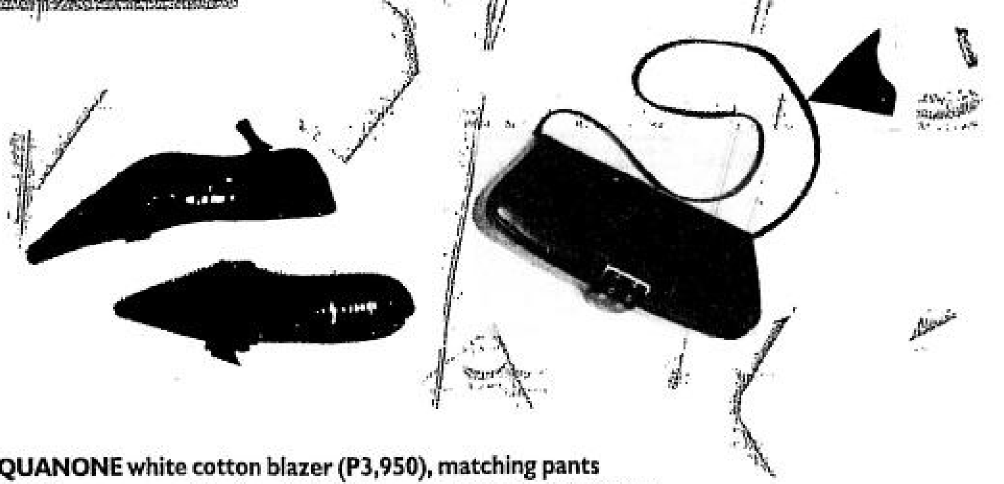
THERE'S nothing like a little rain and the warm summer sun to coax dewy buds into full bloom. And this time of year, there's nothing lovelier than a woman wrapped in clothes that echo the colors of a freshly picked summer posy.

Sophisticated urban women are in for a delightful treat with Rustan's just-arrived ensembles for the season—all from their US and European labels: BCBG, Bazaar Christian Lacroix, Spaghetti & Co., Sinequanone, to name just a few.

Resonating spring's blooming floral trend, clothes come in cool cottons, chic linens and luxurious silks—perfect for when the wind blows unpleasantly hot.

Women can go full-on with the floral theme, with flirty feminine

LIGHT/F2



SINEQUANONE white cotton blazer (P3,950), matching pants (P2,950), Sinequanone tube top (P795), Tosca shoulder bag (P5,250) and Rebeca Sanner court shoes (P5,250)

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BEFORE
AFTER

Many years ago, women who underwent facelift were unhappy because of the long recovery, resulting scars and the "tight" look.

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Say hello to Aptos thread.

Pioneered by Russian plastic surgeon, Dr. Marlen Sulamanidze, and his son, Dr. George Sulamanidze, Aptos Thread is a non-surgical facial rejuvenation method.
And the results are amazing!
You can bring the clock back 5 to 15 years, depending on your anatomy and the skill and experience of the doctor.
The procedure takes less than an hour.
Early results can be seen in just under 24 hours.
Real results can be seen after two weeks.
And final results in less than four weeks.

How does Aptos work?

The basic idea is simple. A "feather weight" high resistance thread anchors itself to the facial tissue as the doctor lifts the sagging anatomical structures following the vectors (directions) appropriate to obtain the desired younger look.

No knives, no scars.

You'll enjoy looking at the mirror again.

The facial features will remain perfectly "anchored" in their new position for years to come.
The wonderful fact that the threads can be "touched up" in later years to maintain the natural and youthful appearance obtained makes this, procedure invaluable.
Before Aptos Thread, the only resource available was the traditional facelift with all its risks, trauma, suffering, prolonged downtime and high cost.

Aptos Thread facelift: Experience counts.

Doctors at the Belo Medical Group were personally trained by Dr. Sulamanidze and they have already handled numerous Aptos procedures.
Aptos-threading looks like a very simple technique but as with any medical procedure, there's no substitute for experience in this particular method.
So, if you're wondering why some of your friends seem to look younger nowadays, they have probably visited Belo's recently. (But, we're not telling).

So, go look at the mirror. With your hands, lift up the portions of your face that Mother Nature can no longer handle. That'll give you an idea of how much younger you can look.
Then visit us.
With the Aptos thread we can help you defy gravity.
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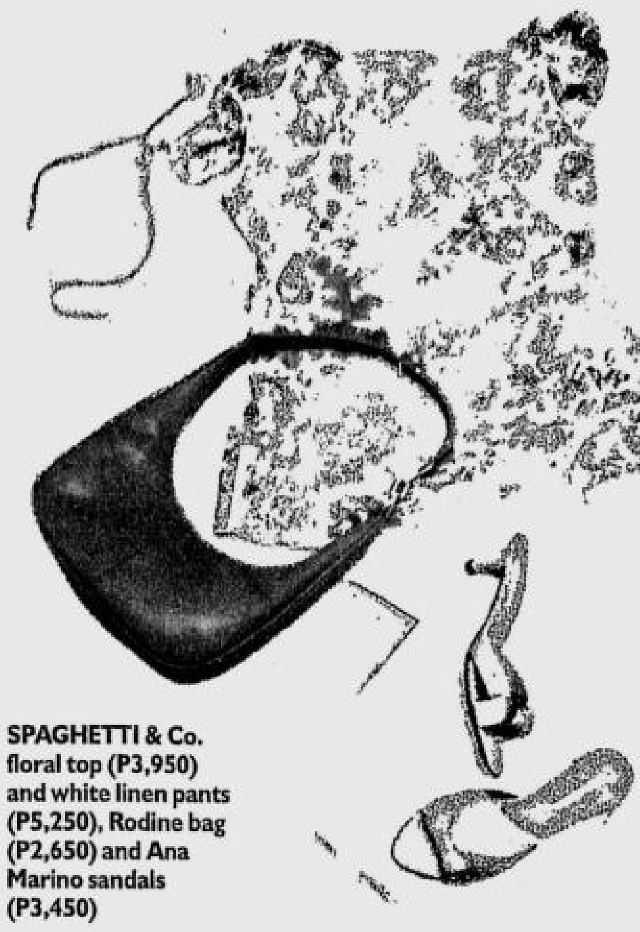


SPAGHETTI & Co. floral top (P3,950) and white linen pants (P5,250), Rodine bag (P2,650) and Ana Marino sandals (P3,450)

SPAGHETTI & Co. sleeveless top (P2,950), matching skirt (P4,250), Tosca handbag (P5,650) and Moda Spaña sandals (P3,250)

TO THE MAX floral top (P2,250) and matching skirt (P2,650), Carlo Felini satin bag (P1,950) and Moda Spaña sandals (P2,950)

Light and white

From page F1

tops and matching asymmetric skirts to floral-print jeans. Another choice is to mix the florals with fresh whites, ivories, pastels. And of course, how can any woman dispense of all-season denims on a leisurely summer day? They can always pick out sexy sandals and mules in satins and pretty handbags in solid colors to complement the look.

If all-white is the order of the day, they can throw in a bold shot of color in their accessories and footwear. Try red against white—the stark contrast will break the monotone. A hint of elegant black is all right, too, against a white or pastel ensemble, especially for those chic evening soirees.

Like a refreshing whiff of the cool summer breeze, this season is the ladies' turn to blossom.

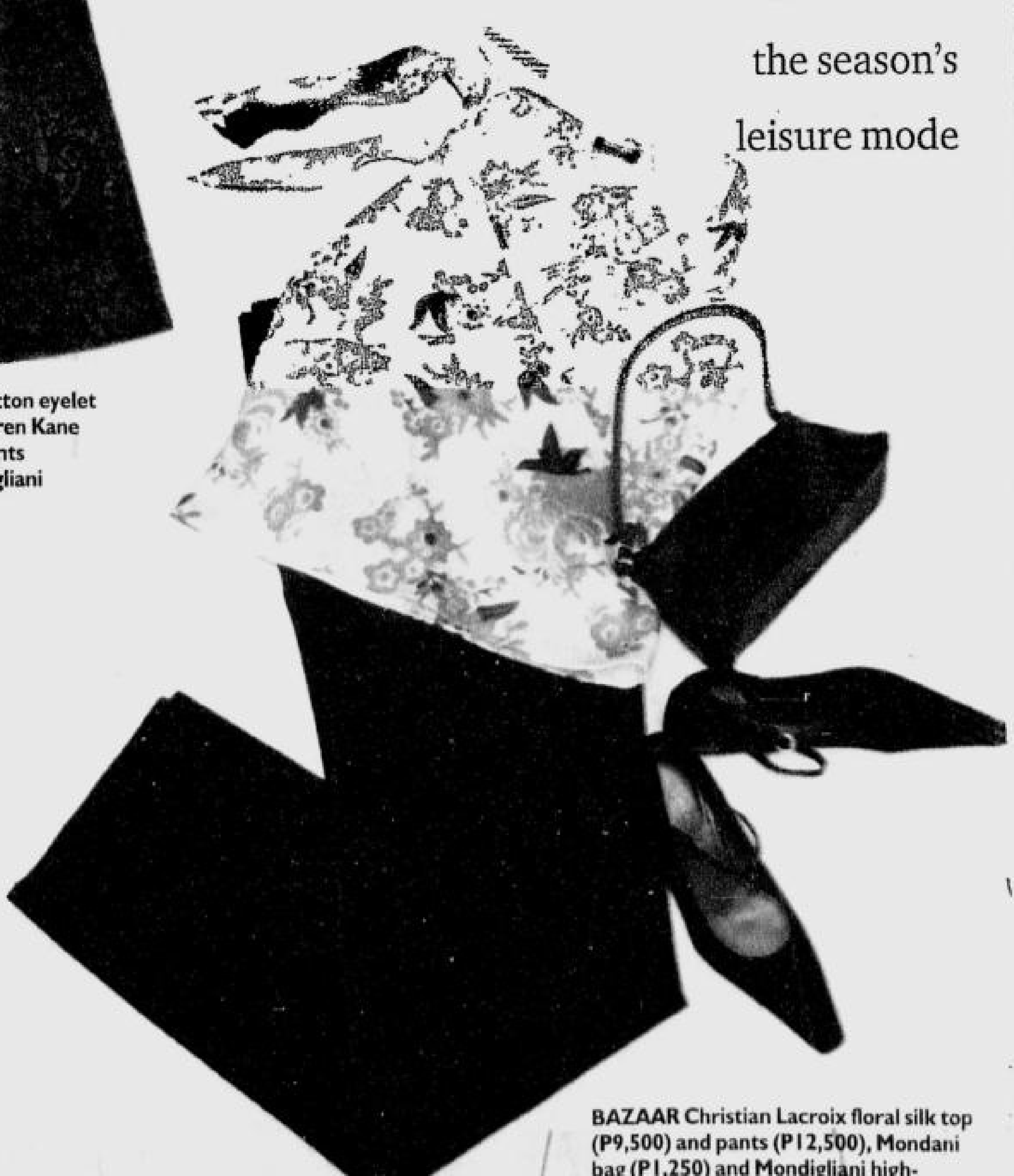
BCBG floral halter top (P4,950) and matching skirt with an asymmetric hem (P4,950), black satin bag (P2,750) and Caparros sandals with floral appliqué (P3,250)

KAREN Kane cotton eyelet top (P3,650), Karen Kane floral-printed pants (P5,250), Mondigliani mules (P4,950)

Have a great summer with the new collection at Rustan's that echoes the season's leisure mode

KAREN Kane cotton eyelet top (P3,650), Karen Kane floral-printed pants (P5,250), Mondigliani mules (P4,950)

SINEQUANONE dress (P4,250), Longchamp bag (P5,450) and BCBG Max Azria mules (P6,750)



BAZAAR Christian Lacroix floral silk top (P9,500) and pants (P12,500), Mondani bag (P1,250) and Mondigliani high-heeled Mary Janes (P4,450)

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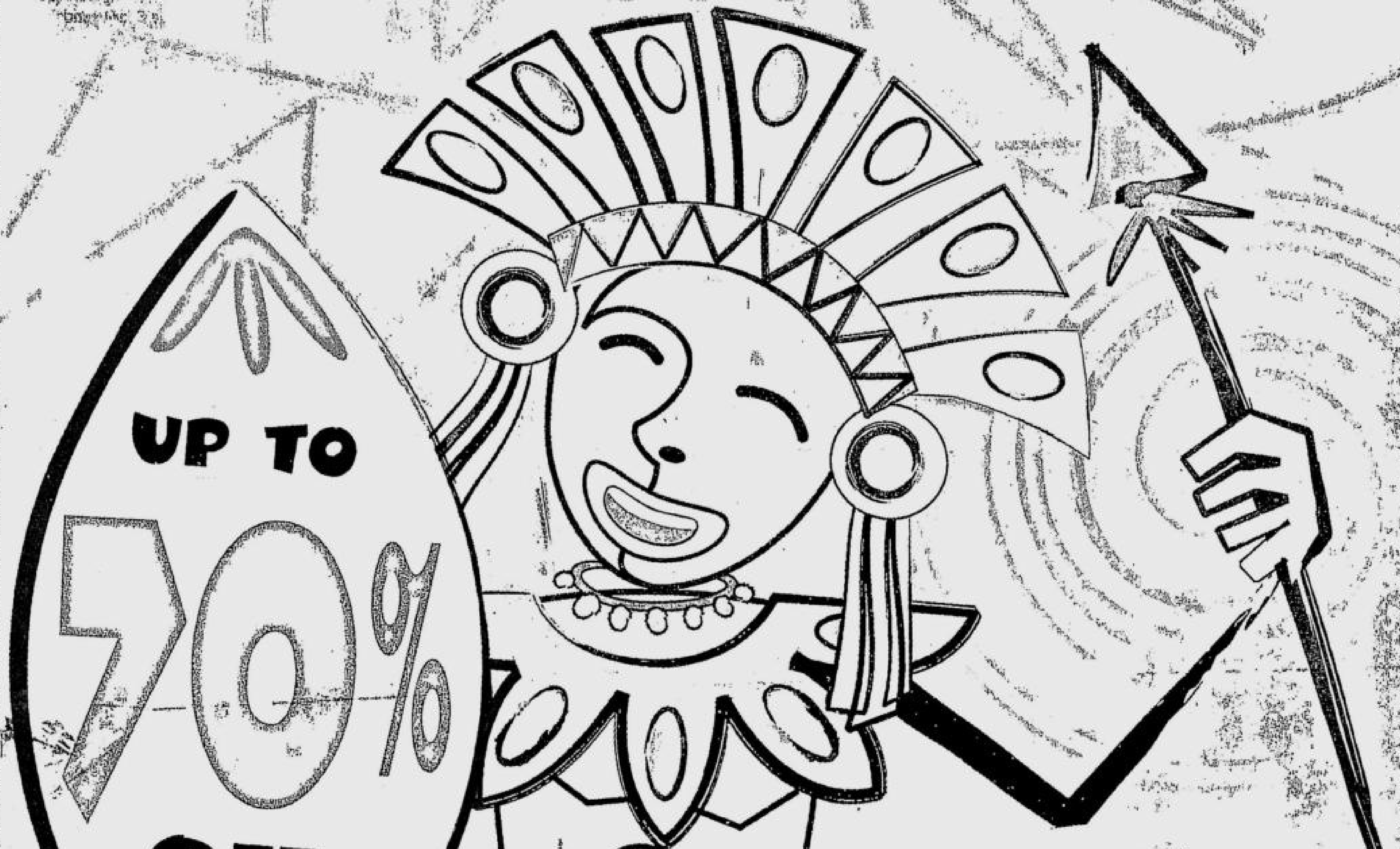

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4. Outlet representative will delete the text message after redemption.

Redemption period is from February 1 to May 31, 2003.

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mercury drug NAKASISIGURO GAMOT AY LAGING BAGO

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HOW TO WIN A TRIP FOR 2 TO HERSHEY'S CHOCOLATE WORLD:

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- Every text message sent to 2994 will be charged ₱1.00.
- Only activated Globe Prepaid SIMs up to March 31, 2003 will be included in the raffle draw.

2. An electronic raffle will be conducted to draw the grand prize winner on April 2, 2003, 4:00 p.m., at 4/F Globe Telecom Plaza Tower 2, corner Pioneer and Madison Streets, Mandaluyong City.

There will be one (1) grand prize winner of a Trip for two (2) to Hershey's Chocolate World in Pennsylvania, USA. Prize is convertible to cash but not transferable. It's inclusive of round trip tickets, 5 days and 4 nights hotel accommodation and $1,000 pocket money. Winner shall be responsible for securing travel documents and for payment of travel taxes and other travel-related expenses. Trip should be availed on or before September 30, 2003.

Globe Telecom shall shoulder the 20% tax on the prize.

3. Winner will be informed via a call through his/her Globe Handyphone to give information on how to claim the prize. In case he/she cannot be contacted by phone, he/she will be notified through registered mail.

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Employees of Globe Telecom, Hershey Philippines, Harrison Communications, Inc., and participating outlets, including their relatives up to the second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the promotion.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0123, Series of 2003.

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Trend Spotting LIFESTYLE

For feedback, text us at (0919)880-33-54 or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

RICKY Reyes has put the senior citizen on the lifestyle map with Gloria Romero as image model. PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

'Lola' can be profitable market, too

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

WHEN Ricky Reyes got 69-year-old Gloria Romero as this year's image model for his hair salon chain, he went against the drift of the era. For the past three decades or so, the world has been obsessed with youth. The marketing/advertising spin of almost everything, from fashion to food, has always been directed at the young. Youth is the barometer of beauty and glamour, so much so that in the celebrity world, you're considered a has-been at 25.

It must have taken sharp business instinct and sheer guts for Ricky to put Ms Romero on a Harley Davidson onstage for the launch show two weeks ago. Using the septuagenarian set as image model for a beauty-service product is not only news but also precedent-setting.

> Ricky Reyes went where others feared to explore, in an era obsessed with youth

In the AFP Theater show that kicked off Ricky Reyes' marketing campaign for 2003, directed by our good friend Floy Quintos, Ms Romero zipped onstage, astride the Harley, dressed in black leather jacket and pants, and white ruffled shirt, her hair a tumble of curls and her face glamorously made up. The sight didn't gross us out. It was actually a powerful moment which the audience obviously loved; it was the evening's grabber. It helped that Ms Romero, the Philippine cinema queen from the '50s, was naturally regal and so articulate in English. She also moved elegantly. (The likes of Ms Romero could teach today's young stars a thing or two about glamour.)

This single stroke put the senior citizen back on the lifestyle map. Ricky didn't need an ad agency to conceptualize it. He thought it up himself. What he had in mind in tapping Ms Romero's services was the World Family Meet—he wanted to appeal to everyone in the family.

I don't know if Ricky was aware of a market study presented to us during a publishing course at Stanford University in the late '90s, which said that the market to woo was what it called the Third Age-men and women in their 50s to 70s, retired but with disposable income. The course advised that niche publishing should not ignore this target market because the Third Age had time for leisure and self-improvement pursuits. Indeed apart from savings and disposable income, this market segment has something the youth or us corporate warriors don't have much of—time to

'LOLA'/ G3

REYES is targeting all market segments—from kids to grandmas and ages in between.

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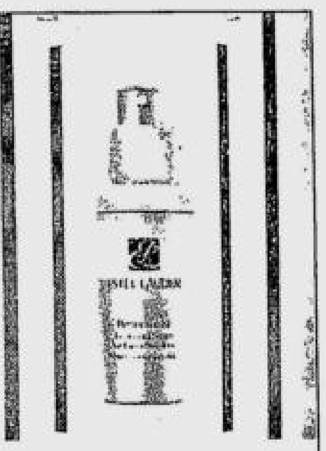

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0266 Series of 2003

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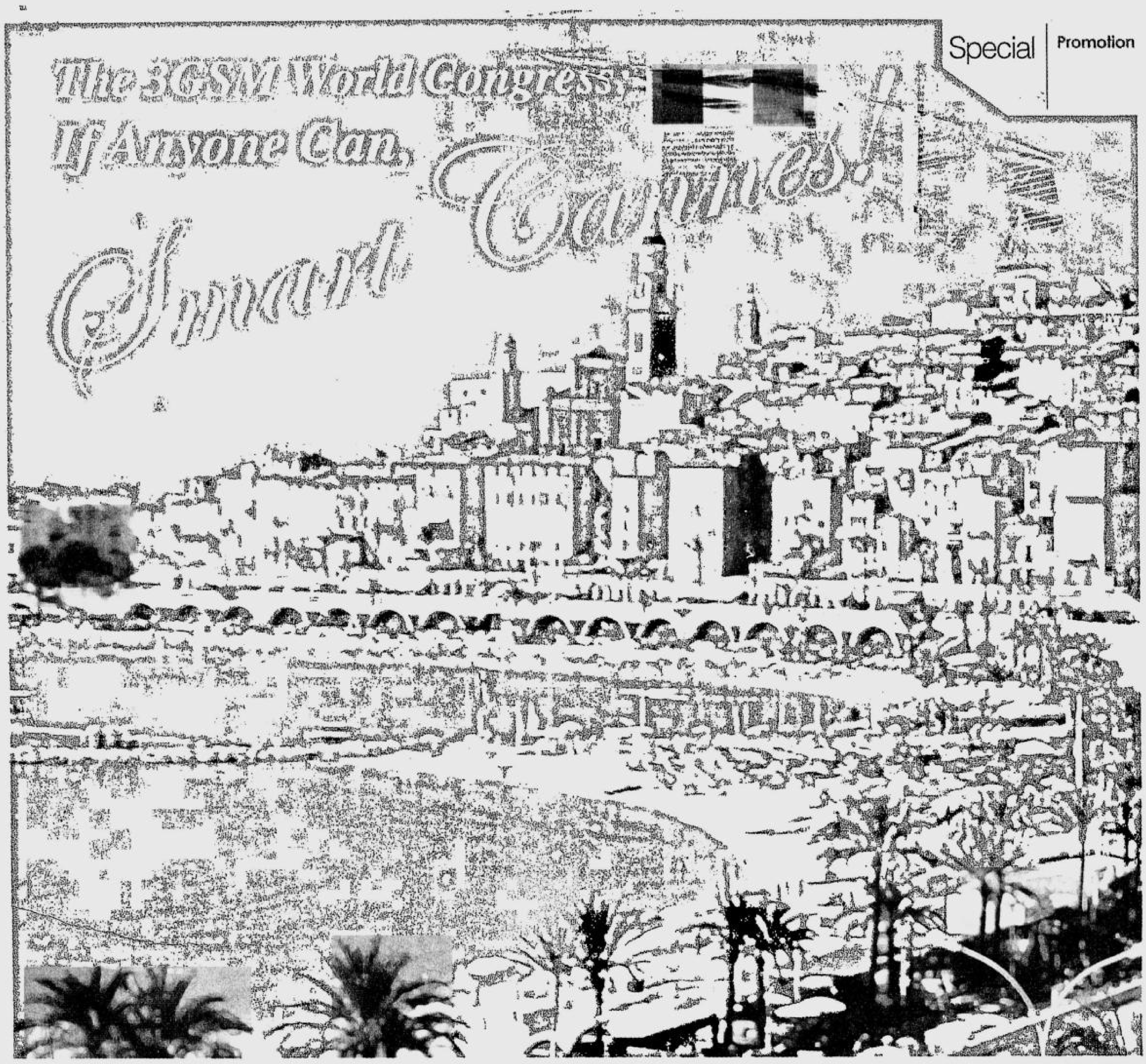
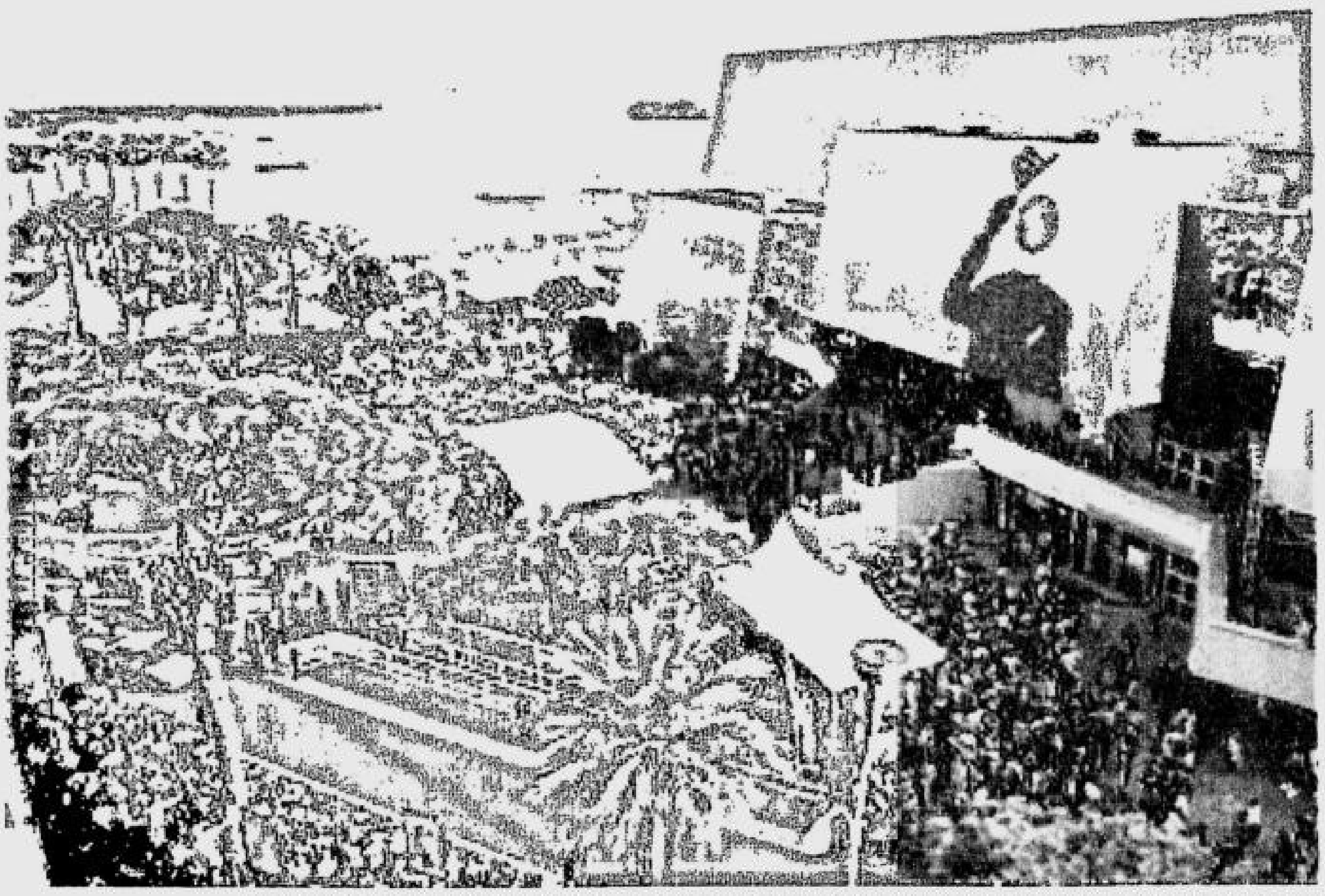
Special | Promotion

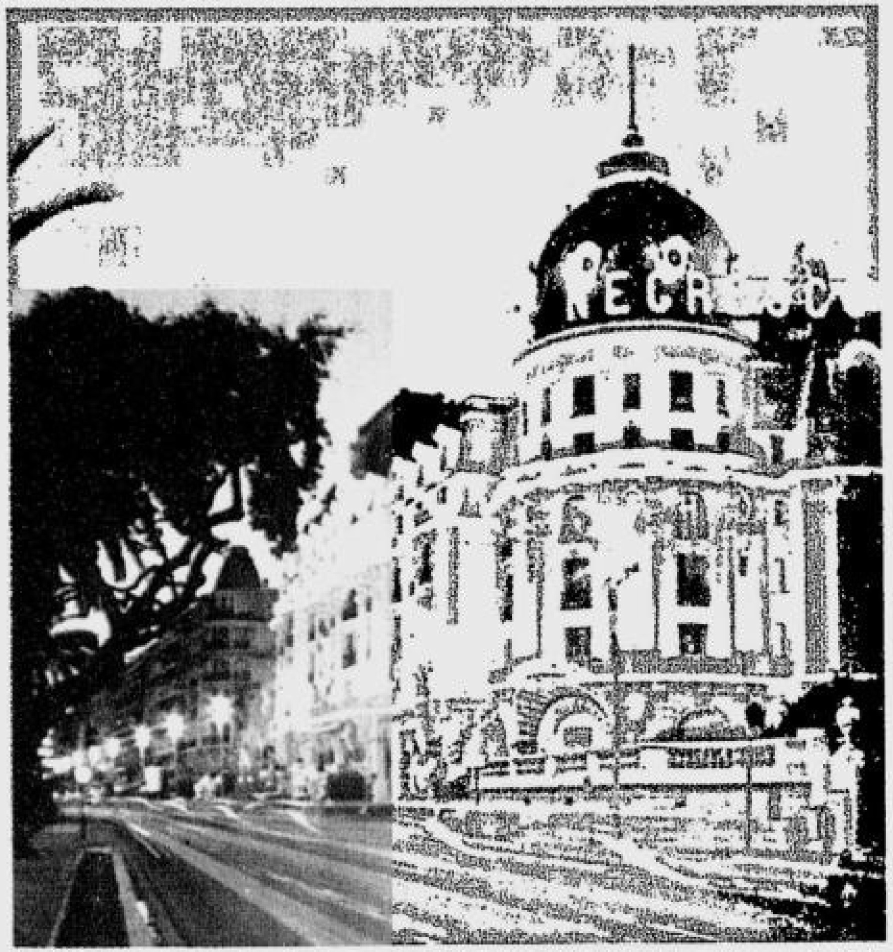
The 3GSM World Congress: If Anyone Can, Smart Cannes!



The South of France: Renowned the world over for its vibrant hotspots graced by the rich and famous



Palais des Festivals: Famous setting for the 2003 3GSM World Congress. Cannes Film Festival also held here.



The beautiful coastal strip of Cannes by night

> "Fresh Thinking. Product Innovation & the Reality of Revenue Growth Generation. That's the message of the 3GSM World Congress 2003."

Smart Communications, the country's leading wireless service provider, takes its experience and expertise to the global arena this week as it attends the 2003 3GSM World Congress held at the celebrated Palais des Festivals in Cannes, France. From February 17 to 21, Smart will attend the largest event for the 3GSM industry along with many other heavyweight GSM service providers from all corners of the globe. Essentially, this congress is where the world comes to do business.

This year, the ultimate objective of the on-going 3GSM World Congress is to highlight and illustrate the existing cutting-edge service and product innovations to date. Furthermore, it aims to enable the delegates to gauge their own wireless telecom business models against those of the industry leaders to determine where industry collaboration is set to restart growth.

More than 24,000 people converged at the 2002 Congress with delegates from 148 countries. And as one might expect, the affair continues to grow and improve each year with more speakers, more networking opportunities, clearer agenda structure, more specialized conference tracks and even more exhibitors.

This year, Smart links up with its fellow global industry leaders in the famed Côte d'Azur, head held up high with pride as Frenchmen do, thanks to the distinction of having the largest average revenue per user (ARPU) generated from data alone—namely text messaging, operator logo and ringtone downloads, SMS-based games and most recently, multimedia messaging (MMS). With a 38.6% share, Smart not only has the highest data generated ARPU in the country, but in the world.

Undoubtedly, GSM is going from strength to strength. Subscriber figures are increasing at a dizzying rate, SMS continues to move up a gear each year and hopes are high for 2003 as the initial hype and popularity of MMS gathered pace towards the last quarter of 2002. Capitalizing on this wave, Smart wasted no time in bringing this revolutionary technology closer to its just under 9 million subscribers, launching an impressive array of MMS services ranging from Disney characters to Traffic Shots and Poly Tones to Card Toons. Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have jumped on the bandwagon, realizing the potential goldmine to be found through this breakthrough technology.

So while Smart basks in the glory of its innovation and progress, its subscribers can rest assured that this trip to the 2003 3GSM World Congress will be a crucial catalyst in further increasing the momentum of Smart's relentless onslaught towards revolutionary technology. By riding the slipstream of the rapid GSM growth, expect to see even brighter days ahead from Smart. C'est magnifique!

ADVT.

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HAIRSTYLES by Ricky Reyes for 2003

'Lola' can be profitable market, too

From page G1

pause and savor life.

One must also keep in mind that given scientific and medical progress, today's 60-something isn't the same as yesterday's 60-something. The 60-year-olds in our midst are actually fit, on the go and have a lust for life; they want to continue feeling—and doing—young. This was why in an Avon Global Conference some years back, a speaker said "biological age" was not necessarily the same as "lifestyle age"—meaning a 60-year-old could actually have the lifestyle and hip attitude of say, a 40-year-old.

In short, when it comes to enjoying life and spending for it, don't count out the older generation. The senior citizens need to feel glamorous and seductive as much as the young (though not with the same success perhaps).

In Ricky's salon, I've spotted a 70-something matron who would go there every day to have her hair done and her face made up for ballroom dancing. Every single day. Golden or post-golden girls will not spare time and money to look good, and feel good. And, unlike young girls on budget, older women can afford to have everything done to them on every visit—from hair treatment to manicure/pedicure and facial.

"Ganda ng lola mo"—it's a crisp take on gayspeak, and it involves a market segment which many feared to explore. According to Ricky, since they hyped Gloria Romero's "lola," his hair salons actually enjoyed an increase in older clientele.

In another maverick move, Ricky is targeting all market segments—from kids to their grandmas. Again, that goes against today's trend of niche marketing. This multi-millionaire businessman actually believes his campaign can cut across all age segments and all income (A to C) brackets.

He's doing mass and niche marketing simultaneously. I don't know of any product today that does that.

Ricky is defying the norm of today's advertising and marketing. It would be interesting to watch how this plays out. But then, when you talk track record, he has not only the record, but also the fortune to show for it.

Unexpected in Baguio

We didn't mean to, but we spent last weekend in Baguio, a few days before the renowned Baguio Flower Festival this week. Like all things unplanned, this one yielded surprises worth their place in our memory bank.

Early morning, I dragged myself out of the room at Camp John Hay Manor, to the rousing morning cold outside, and set out on the camp's ecotrail. Fil-Estate chair, Bob Sobrepeña, told me about this last year but I didn't get to try it until last weekend, going along with friends whose stubborn idea of day starts before 7 a.m.

You should try the ecotrail when you find yourself in Baguio this summer. It's a good 1.8 kilometer walk or jog, not daunting at all, but calming. You find yourself deep in the woods, feeling like an insignificant figure amid the towering pine trees. You are in the heart of this lushness—no cell phone, no sound or sight of the outside world, with the dense umbrella of trees letting in just enough slivers of sunlight.

It was a good workout for the body, and more so for the mind. Made the mind sweat out its unnecessary clutter. From the trail, we trekked to the cluster of restos nearby—Country Waffles and Starbucks in quaint wooden structures—for brewed coffee and plain waffle (all right, with bacon strips, too). You felt blessed to start the day this way, for a change.

A cozy lifestyle seems to be taking shape at Camp John Hay. There's a row of retail shops and restos near the manor, selling the necessities and luxuries, from wine to sports gear. Monday night we dropped by Strumm's and loved the R & B, retro repertoire of Sound Check, a group of Baguio musicians that you should check out. They're good. With Stevie Wonder's "Overjoyed" ending their set, you couldn't ask for anything more to cap the night.

We revisited Salud! Bistro, a favorite resto these days of artists like Bencab, yuppies and, in general, those who want fine food in Baguio. It was Bencab who first brought our group there late last year. Salud! Bistro is the former residence-turned-resto of the Tesoros.

It's a '50s-style bungalow with ceiling beams and jalousie windows, the former painted in vermilion for post-'90s hipness.

To say that it has ambience is an understatement. Think of what fashion designer-Filipiniana artist Patis Tesoro can do with her limitless trove of Filipiniana and Orientalia and her even more boundless mind, and you can imagine what the place is like. Patis' family owns the place. She fixed it up with her daughter Nina, a graphic designer who, with her chef husband Paul Poblador, runs the joint.

The fixtures and décor accents are Orientalia and Filipiniana. Interesting stone sculptures, strategically perched on the fountain, greet you as you pass the garden. A huge resin sculpture titled "Half a China man"—a giant bust of a China man—by Peter Pinder is at the doorway. Pinder is a British artist who settled in Baguio and married a Filipina. The Pinders' works, including paintings and decorative candle holders, are among the place's temporary décor and are for sale. I presume other Baguio artists take turns in displaying their works in the resto.

The bar is made of lacquer screens and sets the fusion-Orientalia theme of the place. There are antique posters from China, picture frames, bird cages, Filipiniana furniture, framed *piña* hankies, and, of course, Patis' signature Filipiniana dolls in awesomely intricate native costumes. Everywhere you look is an art object of interest your eyes can feast on. Even glass dividers bear images that will grab you.

A match to this visual feast is the gustatory experience. That night we had Salud! organic green salad (organic greens are used for salads), native duck L'Orange on mountain rice risotto—the duck was tender but with a crispness to suit our taste. It was so good that our companion couldn't wait to return the next evening to have it again.

We returned the following night and this time had curry smothered young goat on herb couscous and garlic and thyme-scented lamb shank stew on grilled ratatouille—two entrees in one night, preceded by caramelized onion and seared shiitake soup. We didn't regret our choices. They were sumptuous.

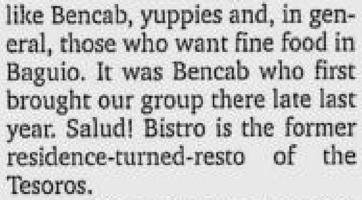
Paul Poblador, the 28-year-old chef, is doing French cuisine using fresh ingredients available in Baguio. The result is lighter, refreshing, in short more suited to the Filipino palate, than traditional French cuisine. He calls it the new Baguio French cuisine.

Before Salud! Paul had a stint at Mandarin Oriental, Grassi's and in London.

So if you're driving up to Baguio this weekend for the flower festival, Salud! is another resto you can check out.

E-mail author at tsanjuan@skyinet.net

Quick-fix and long-term skin care in one product



NU Skin, the personal care division of Nu Skin Enterprises Inc., packs quick fix and longer-term solution for skin problems in just one product—Nu Colour Dual Active Color Corrector.

The new product covers and corrects skin imperfections with a lightweight, natural finish that leaves skin fresh and radiant.

It is available in two colors, green and yellow. The green conceals and corrects red skin tones caused by breakouts and broken capillaries. With aloe, oregano and apricot, it helps calm and soothe reddened, troubled skin.

The yellow corrects bluish skin tones associated with puffy, dark under-eye circles. Essential ingredients ginkgo bilboa, chamomile, Vitamin C, aloe and watercress help minimize puffiness around the eyes.

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OFFICE/COMPANY NAME ______
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Of fashionable hues and a California wedding

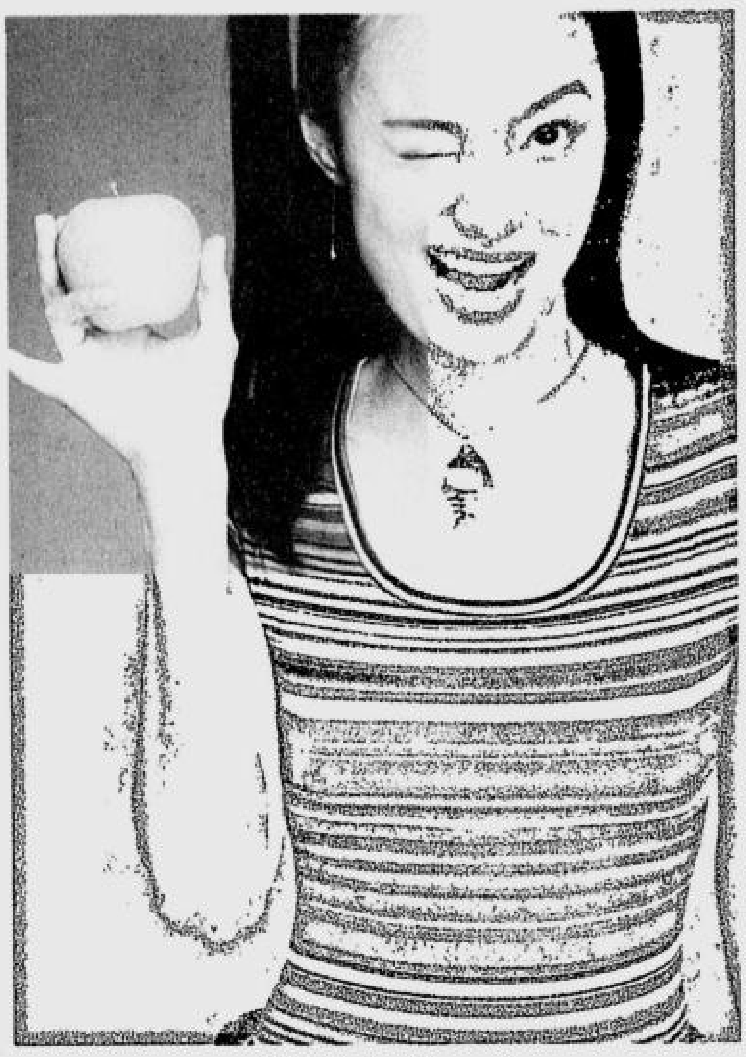
APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

I WAS cleaning my closet recently when I noticed that almost all my clothes were black, white, beige or gray. I realized that I've been wearing really drab, boring outfits, and I would love to inject a bit of color into my wardrobe, especially because pastels and bright hues are so "in" this summer. Any suggestions on how I can do this without throwing out all my clothes and spending too much?

I can't blame you for sticking to basic colors that you can easily mix and match. Black, for example, is safe, elegant and quite possibly, glamorous. But then again, quite boring at times. White is always clean, classic and refreshing but sometimes just a bit washed-out. And although you can never go wrong with neutrals, it is always a welcome change to don cheerful colors that can make one feel a little more lively, flirty and feminine.

Now is the perfect time to give your wardrobe a shot in the arm. The spring/summer fashion collections are awash with colors from psychedelic, acid-like hues to pretty and preppy pastels to calming sea greens and blues.



WARM colors like peach, copper, sage green and yellow gold suit most Filipinas.

Know your undertone

But before you go on an impulsive shopping spree, you must first determine what colors suit you best. Most Filipinas have yellow undertones, which means warm hues like peach, ginger, copper, yellow gold and even sage green will suit them best. Those with pink undertones (usually *mestizas* or Caucasians) are well complemented by icy colors like sky blue or mint green.

Once you've established your undertones, you can start buying a few articles of clothing and accessories to update your colorless wardrobe. You don't have to throw away anything from your closet. All you have to do is mix and match your new vibrant pieces with your staples.

Start by purchasing knit tops or bottoms in different hues like pink, green or blue. Match these with items you already have, including jeans, and black, white, gray and even beige bottoms or tops. It's a good idea to wear one color accent at a time so the change is not too drastic for you.

You can also buy multicolored accessories similar to the bags and shoes from Paul Smith's Swirly collection, bags from Louis Vuitton's Murakami collection, or the like. These pieces can very easily liven up your ba-

OF FASHIONABLE/ H2

> It is always a welcome change to don cheerful colors that can make one feel a little more lively, flirty and feminine

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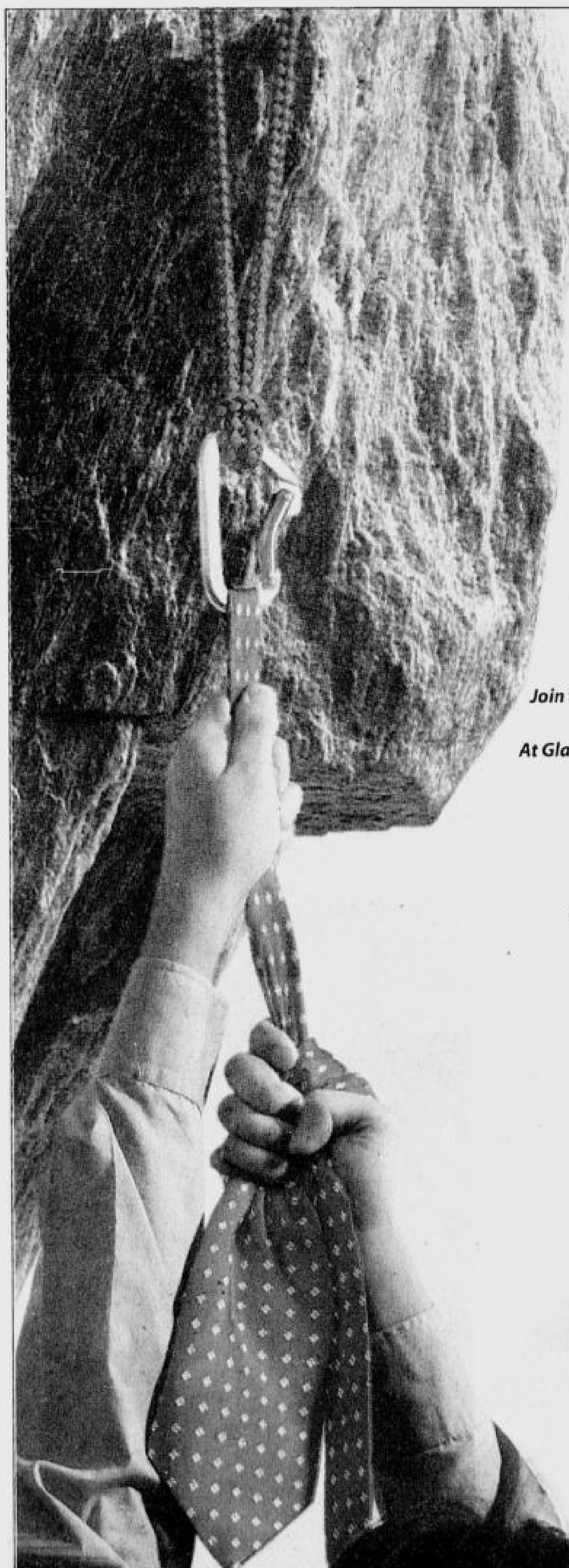
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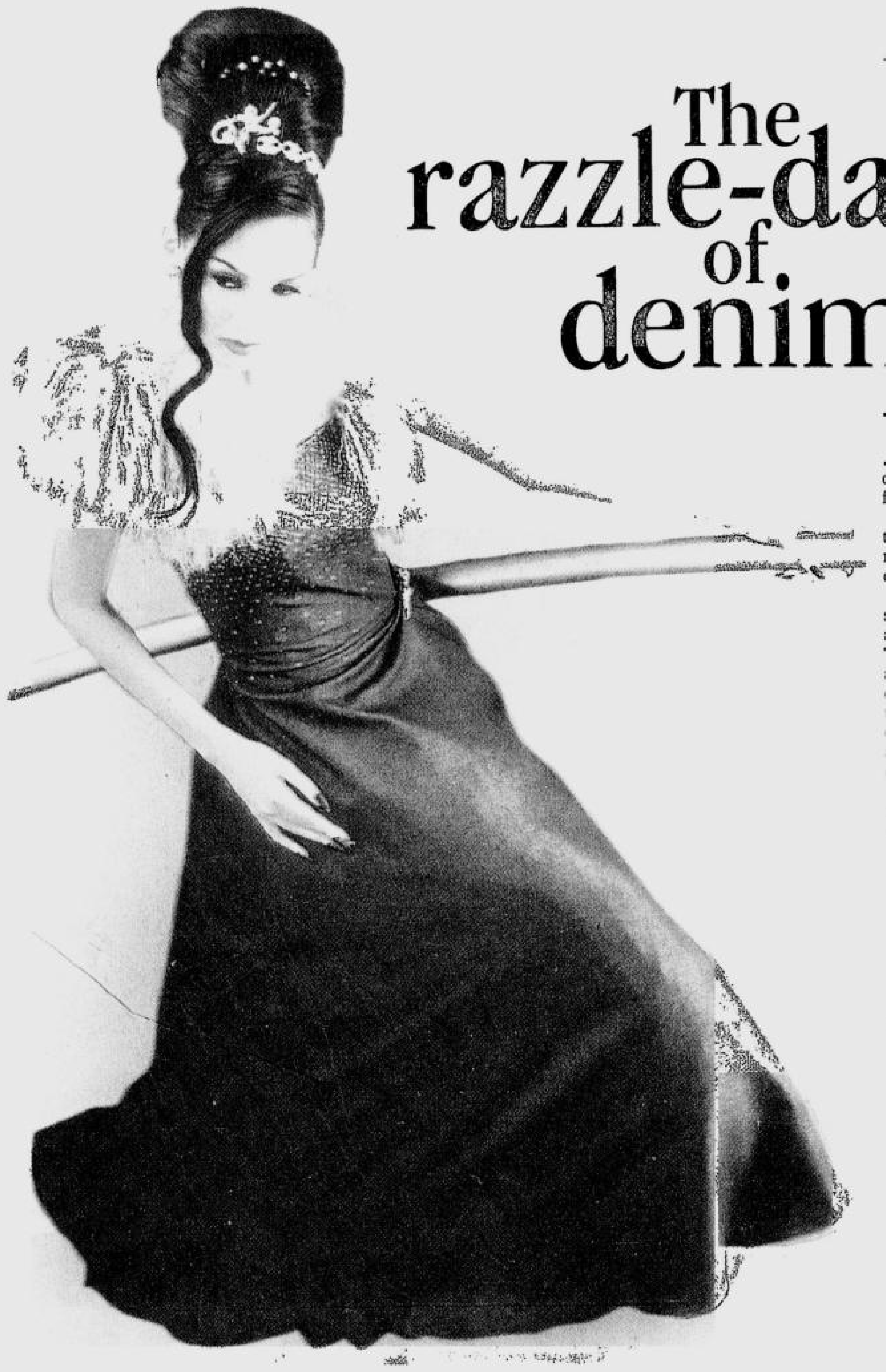
The razzle-dazzle of denims

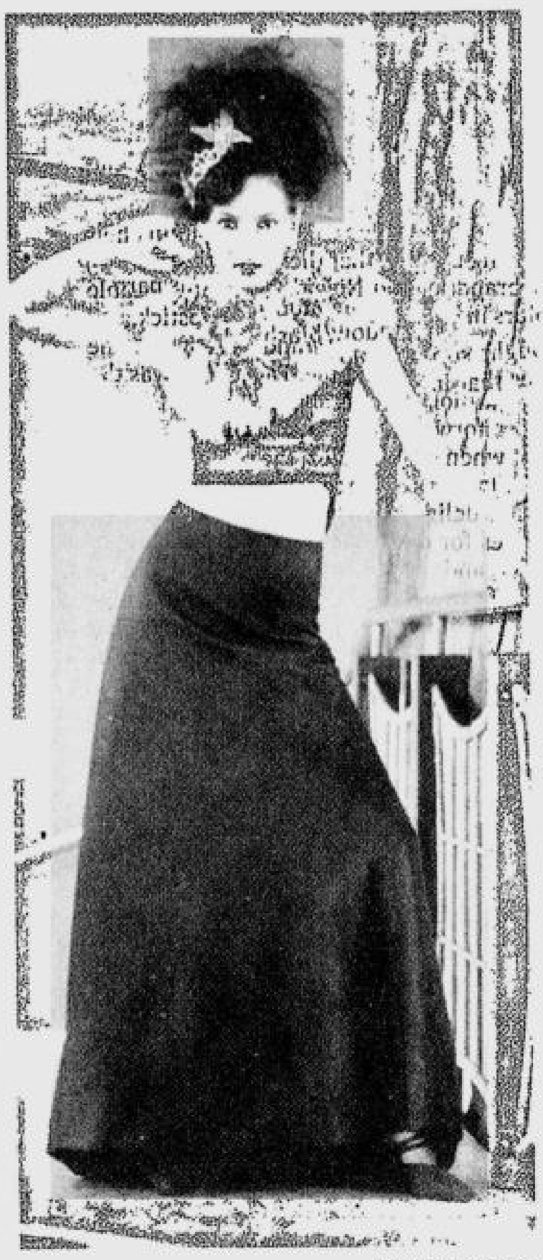


EDDIE Baddeo, known for transforming the commonplace into chic wearables, weaves his magic on the denim fabric as his opening salvo for 2003.

Working with the rugged fabric traditionally used for working clothes, the irrepressible designer unveils a collection of evening formals for the young.

Baddeo has come up with a refreshing set of glamorous after-six outfits. He creates sweeping skirts for ballroom floors. Tops are streamlined and bare, with only a sprinkling of rhinestones and constructed in sleek geometrical cuts. Adding to the understated opulence are the touches of faux fur in varying shades, from emerald to turquoise. The collection is cutting edge yet soft, powerful yet feminine.

Denims, despite an uninspired beginning, have come up in the world to become almost haute couture.



ABBREVIATED sleeveless top crowned by luxurious fur on the neckline and matched with a stark, roomy skirt

STRAPLESS ball gown with a sweeping skirt and a top generously dotted with rhinestones. Purple faux fur caresses the shoulders and back.

CROPPED top features a flowing collar dusted with rhinestones and cradled by emerald fur. The skirt is an understated counterpoint made elegant by draping and witty string work.

The rugged workman's fabric takes on glamour in designer Baddeo's hands

INGENIOUSLY cut top is seductive halter on one side and romantic poet sleeves with a dash of fur on the other.

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VENUE:
KKK (KAINAN SA KALYE KANLURAN)
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Of fashionable hues and a California wedding

From page H1

sics. You can also match them with your new colored pieces for a fully bright summer look.

It's been quite a while since designers and design houses have had such a love affair with vivid, vivacious colors. So, don't be afraid to experiment with different hues and enjoy this fashionably colorful season!

Summer nuptials

I will be attending a wedding in the United States for the first time. I would like to know the proper attire for a summer wedding, which will be held in California. I am a "blazer and slacks" person and I love wearing basic colors. I'm not quite fond of or comfortable wearing skirts or gowns because I'm on the "heavy side."

There are so many different outfits you can wear to a summer wedding in California, depending on the time of day and how formal the affair is. For morning weddings, one may wear feminine, 1950s-inspired dresses in silk shantung. For strictly formal sit-down affairs, one will have to don drop-dead gorgeous gowns reminiscent of Oscar's night.

Since you didn't mention the time or formality of the event, I will suggest several outfits that you can choose from. I've tailored my suggestions to your partiality to jackets and trousers so you can be as comfortable and confident as possible.

EXPERIMENT with different hues to liven up your wardrobe. Wear one color accent at a time so the change is gradual.

I'll leave it up to you to determine which outfit is most appropriate. Here are my suggestions:

Morning, garden or afternoon weddings

Choose a pantsuit in a dressy fabric like silk shantung or Thai silk. Since it is summer, it's best to pick light colors like baby blue, blush or sage green. If you are not comfortable wearing colored pieces, other hues like dove blue, which is similar to light gray, or shell pink, which is close to light beige, are good options.

You may also wear light-colored day suits in fabrics like linen, silk or cotton piqué but make sure you use dressy accessories like pearl strands and a pair of high-heeled sandals.

Semi-formal weddings

You can wear the same silk shantung and Thai silk suits you would use for a morning, garden or afternoon wedding to semi-formal affairs. The difference lies in the accessories you use. Since you are attending a more formal affair, you can wear a beaded shell top, strappy pastel metallic sandals, a beaded or metallic clutch and a diamond choker or pair of earrings.

You may also choose suits made of fabrics like iridescent taffeta or satin. Ice cream bright colors are all the rage this summer. So, if you are feeling a bit adventurous, why not opt for a suit in lime, citrus or strawberry?

Strictly formal affairs

Instead of an ordinary suit, why don't you don a chic and sleek satin tuxedo? Match this with diamond studs, satin high-heeled shoes, a tiny beaded clutch, and you'll look as glamorous as all those Hollywood stars in Los Angeles. To feminize your tux, you may wear a frilly, ruffled but sheer or diaphanous top. Or choose a vixen-like plunging beaded top.

For these affairs, it might be safer to ask the bride if she would prefer her guests to be in formal long gowns. If you are not very close to her, ask one of her friends or relatives so you have a better idea of what to wear.

In case you do find out that the bride would like all her guests to be in gowns, then try your best to comply with her wishes. Don't worry. There are several gown styles that can make you look less heavy.

If you are conscious about your body size, choose a style with three-quarter sleeves, a V-neckline and an A-line skirt that flatters most body types. Then, pick structured summer fabrics like organza, silk-shantung or Thai silk.

You forgot to mention where in California the wedding will be held. Do remember that if you are headed for northern California, it might get a bit chilly at night, so you might need a pretty stole, shawl or wrap.

As always, complete your look with pretty but natural looking makeup, a hairdo that will match your outfit and, more importantly, confidence and charm.

Email the author at apsadvice@hotmail.com

Look fabulous with new makeup colors

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

SKINCARE and makeup are my greatest passions. For a time, I stopped looking at local brands. I couldn't help noticing though, that there was this particular brand named Nichido that had useable colors in eye shadow, blush and lipstick, so I bought some products and mentioned the ones that impressed me. Packaging was decent and nothing was above P100.

Fast forward to present time four years later, when Arlene Velez, the owner's daughter-in-law, asked me to sample her products.

I was delighted to find that they now have palettes for eyes and cheeks, more useable colors and the biggest surprise: yellow-toned foundation. Her most expensive item was at P395, a pure goat hair finishing powder brush that goes for P2,000+ in other imported brands. I know it's pure because I invest in my tools, and the feel on my skin was unmistakable. Aside from that, no other product is priced above P200.

Foundation—They had none in liquid form—all two-way powder formulas.

Matte Two Way Cake, P128—available in three shades and comes with a very good quality sponge. The coverage is medium to full and is suitable for normal to oily skin. Protects from UVA rays that cause premature aging. Great shades: Natural is their translucent shade that blends with most skin tones except the very dark. Subtle beige-pale yellow in color, similar to the powders of Bobbi Brown and T. Le Clerc's Banane. Packaging is navy rectangle.

Dual Powder Foundation with UVA/UVB protection, P168—gives sheer to medium coverage and suitable for normal to dry skin. Nice shades: Warm Beige and Honey will give a glow to most complexions. Packaging: elegant black with gold accents.

Powder, P89.50—for both loose (two shades: ivory and coral) and pressed (five shades).

Eye shadow—has 17 shades in all at P68 each. Packaging is small, round and black with a transparent twist on cover. The finish is sheer so one can experiment with colors without fear of looking clownish. Favorite shades: All 17, but most especially bronze eclair (brown sugar), electric pink (bubble gum pink, can double as blush), sugar berry (red brown shimmer), champagne (pale yellow), gold foil (gold beige shimmer), sea shell (pearl white), pink dusk (brown pills), and cocoa pearl (milk chocolate). Great bargain: The last three shades mentioned are available in a skinny rectangular black palette for only P150. That's P54 savings in all.

Blusher—8 shades in all, at P80 each. Most colors are brown-based pinks and peach, and they are all universally safe. Palette of three costs P198 with colors peach glow, cool rum (pink brown), and sun kissed (pink red). My other faves are desert rose and tomato.

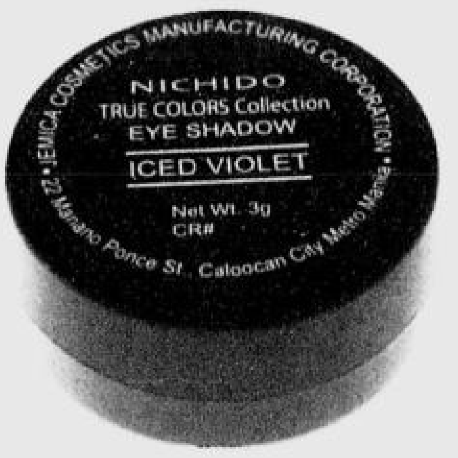
Lipstick—Their star product is the lip shimmer at P168. Packaging is silver colored aluminum with metallic lavender accent. Case is shorter than usual lipstick packaging. It is moisturizing with shimmery color. Similar to Maybelline Wet Shine, L'Oreal Shine Delice and Bobbi Brown Shimmer Gloss stick. Wins best packaging, hands down!

Most popular shade is Shimmer Beige, a pinky beige shade that suits most skin tones. I also like Radiant Red (effect and shade like red foil). Makes lips look fuller and moisturized. Other shades are: shining copper (peachy brown) and pink pearl (icy pink). Classic and Satin Moist lipsticks are at P120 each. They go on like cream lipstick but Satin Moist goes on thicker. Shades I liked: Natural—Angelina Jolie beige, Pink nude-brownish pink, Skin—beige mauve, Brandy—Sienna with gold shimmer like MAC's "O," and Plum Brown—dead ringer for Revlon's Toast of New York. Classic's packaging is a matte black squarish cylinder and Satin moist is platinum cylinder (old packaging) or mint green and silver cylinder (new packaging).

Biggest bargain: Long Wearing Eye pencil P50—two shades (brown and black), extra long varnished wood effect (almost twice as long as regular eye pencils).

E-mail the author at Kinnysalas@yahoo.com

NICHIDO Shining Copper lip shimmer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NICHIDO Iced Violet eye shadow

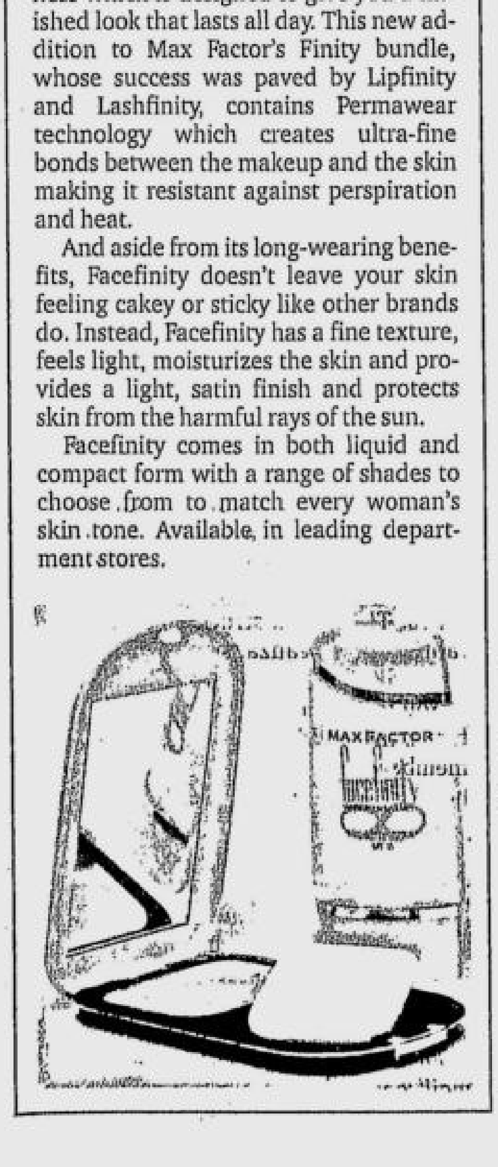
PHOTOS: ROMY HOMILLADA

Say farewell to retouch

MAX Factor introduces Facefinity, a long-wearing makeup with incredible lightness which is designed to give you a finished look that lasts all day. This new addition to Max Factor's Finity bundle, whose success was paved by Lipfinity and Lashfinity, contains Permawear technology which creates ultra-fine bonds between the makeup and the skin making it resistant against perspiration and heat.

And aside from its long-wearing benefits, Facefinity doesn't leave your skin feeling cakey or sticky like other brands do. Instead, Facefinity has a fine texture, feels light, moisturizes the skin and provides a light, satin finish and protects skin from the harmful rays of the sun.

Facefinity comes in both liquid and compact form with a range of shades to choose from to match every woman's skin tone. Available in leading department stores.



The French Baker's Golden Rules

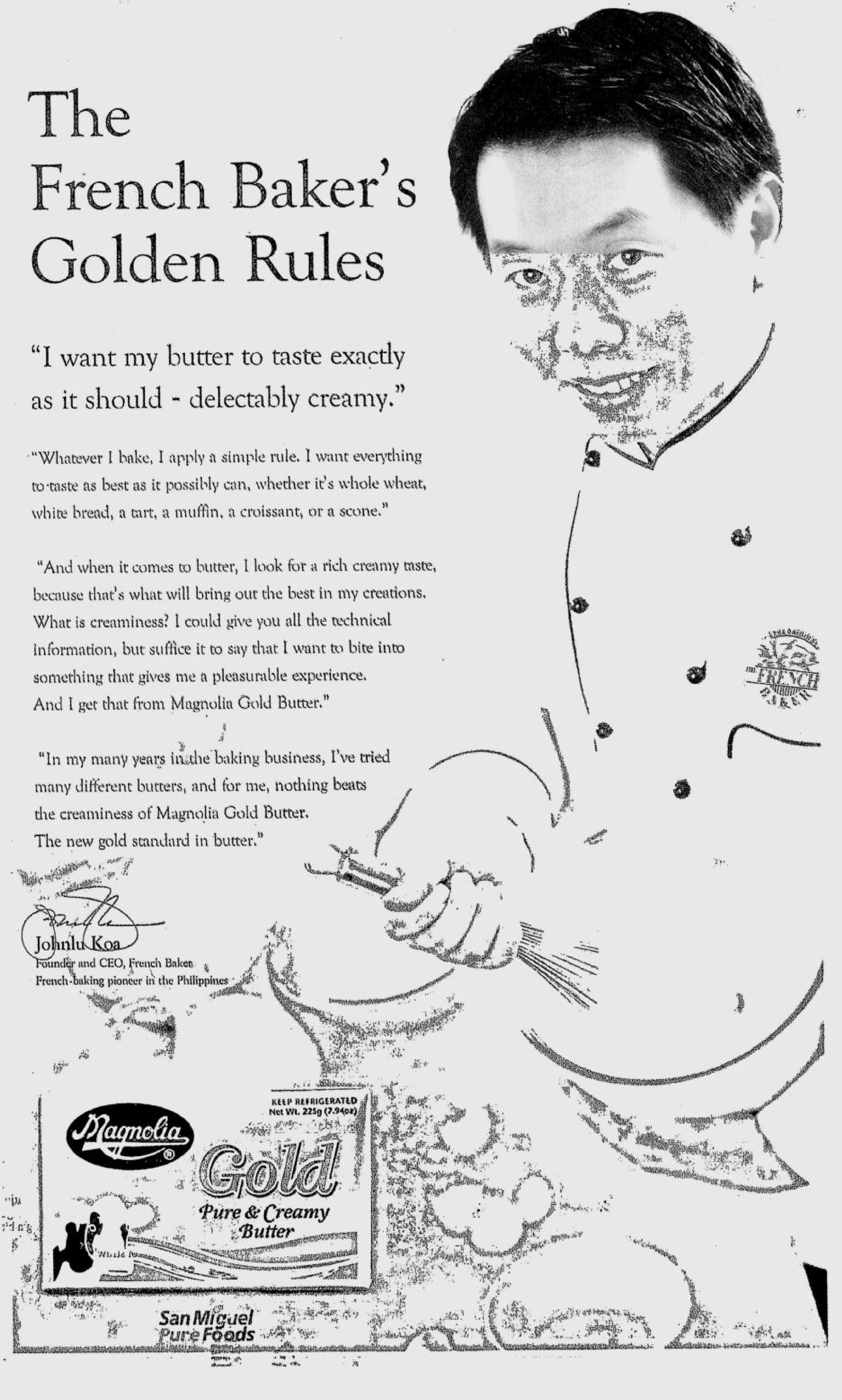
"I want my butter to taste exactly as it should - delectably creamy."

"Whatever I bake, I apply a simple rule. I want everything to taste as best as it possibly can, whether it's whole wheat, white bread, a tart, a muffin, a croissant, or a scone."

"And when it comes to butter, I look for a rich creamy taste, because that's what will bring out the best in my creations. What is creaminess? I could give you all the technical information, but suffice it to say that I want to bite into something that gives me a pleasurable experience. And I get that from Magnolia Gold Butter."

"In my many years in the baking business, I've tried many different butters, and for me, nothing beats the creaminess of Magnolia Gold Butter. The new gold standard in butter."

Johnlu Koa
Founder and CEO, French Baker
French-baking pioneer in the Philippines



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